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COMMONWEAL

EASTER: HAS IT MADE A DIFFERENCE?
William J. Rewak

ITALIAN JEWS UNDER FASCISM
Philip P. Hallie

THE HISTORICAL JESUS
Luke Timothy Johnson

An exchange of views:
'DUAL LOYALTIES IN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY'
Robert P. Imbelli & William M. Shea

PAUL BAUMANN on Liturgical Gridlock

BOOKS

DENNIS O'BRIEN on
the mechanisms of the mind

NANCY M. HAEGEL on
flying buttresses and engineers

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CORRESPONDENCE

Koller article tops

Collingswood, N.J.

To the Editors: Re: "The Myth of No Limits: All Health Care Is Temporary," by Christopher Koller [March 27]: As a senior administrator of an urban, tertiary, and teaching hospital, and a new enrollee in a heart transplant program, I found this article politically prophetic, socially courageous, and morally correct. Because of my job and inclination, I read a great deal on health-care public policy. This is the finest article I have ever read, anywhere.

As is so often the case, *Commonweal* is anything but common.

JOSEPH A. PACERA

Stations crossed out

Rockport, Mass.

To the Editors: Franklin McMahon's art is impressive, as always, but Irene McMahon's text accompanying his Holy Land sketches ["Via Crucis," March 27] involves *Commonweal* in the perpetuation of a myth.

There was no meeting of "Jesus and his blessed mother" on the way to Calvary, as stated for Station IV—at least none that the Scriptures speak of. Which is why Pope John Paul II eliminated the meditation from the Stations of the Cross he led at 1991's Good Friday devotions at the Coliseum.

Eliminated too by him were the old meditations for Station VI, "Veronica wipes the face of Jesus," and Stations VII and IX, the second and third falls of Jesus. Seems none of them was mentioned either by the Scriptures.

In their stead, the pope substituted scripturally documented happenings; namely, "The agony in the garden," "Jesus, betrayed by Judas, is arrested," "Jesus is denied by Peter," and "Jesus promises redemption to the good thief." Then, in a rearrangement of the concluding Stations, he inserted "Jesus on the cross, with his mother and Saint John at the foot of the cross."

So what should pastors do, tear the old Stations out and install new ones?

Not to worry, said a Vatican spokesman last year; the old Stations remain "fully valid and may be taken up again in the future." Which means, I guess, that there's always room in our church for a bit of pious mythology.

JOHN DEEDY

Maura-San no model

Diablo, Calif.

To the Editors: "In Twenty-Seven Short Years: The Enlightenment of Maura-San O'Halloran" [February 28] was for me a sad and disturbing story.

Rather than finding Maura to have been a Buddhist saint, I find her to have been a rather lost, searching young woman who embraced a cult and permitted herself to be led by a powerfully compelling cult leader. Self-induced frost-bitten feet, self-induced sleep deprivation, and a determination "to become one with *mu* [nothingness]" are not characteristic of a healthy, reasonably normal young adult.

Ruth L. O'Halloran obviously wishes to view her daughter's life favorably. I, however, would never hold up Maura-San O'Halloran as a role model. Quite the contrary.

KAY SIEMSSEN BATTS

Rogues Catholic

Fresno, Calif.

To the Editors: As a former Rhode Islander, I noted with amusement and chagrin David Carlin's announcement of his congressional candidacy ["A Choice in Rhode Island," March 13]. His litany of shenanigans and crimes in the state, to which many more civil and ecclesiastical ones could be added, shows why the state might still be called "Rogues' Island," as it was designated by colonial wags.

One element not mentioned by Mr. Carlin is that his small state is overwhelmingly Catholic (63 percent, the last I heard). Hence the abortion issue might be seen as having added importance. It is interesting, however, that the moral degradation he outlines doesn't seem to generate the same heat in the electoral process. Many state political leaders, including many of those mentioned in the column, are the proud products of parochial school education and even of Catholic higher education at Providence College.

Given those facts, one might wonder why Catholic teaching would not be applied across the board to ethical issues of honesty, justice, and public/private morality in the political realm. Could it be that volatile issues are easier to politicize for personal gain? Or perhaps it's that the political process itself has become so much a matter of image over substance that a candidate's character doesn't really matter. Determining which way the herd's running and hurrying to get out in front of it may be the best definition of current political leadership.

(REV.) DAVID J. NORRIS

Mental gymnastics

Hollis, N.Y.

To the Editors: "Why They Died," Margaret O'Brien Steinfels's column [March 13] on nine deaths by asphyxiation at the City College gym on December 28 and the fatal February 26 shooting at Thomas Jefferson High School of two stu-

(Continued on page 29)

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COMMONWEAL

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Awaiting resurrection

In El Salvador, the Stations of the Cross will take place this Holy Week much as they did during twelve years of civil war. There will be outdoor processions in San Salvador, with throngs proceeding from one corner shrine to another. There will be catechetical gatherings of Christian base communities in the small chapels of rural resettlement villages. At the University of Central America, the Jesuit university, people will pray in the chapel before the stark black and white drawings of Salvadorans being tortured by death squads. (This contemporary *via crucis* is just a stone's throw from the garden where six Jesuits and two other university employees, all murdered by the army in November 1989, lie buried.)

Thirteen years ago, on another Good Friday, Archbishop Oscar Romero asked his congregation: "When are we going to understand that God not only gives happiness but also tests our faithfulness in moments of affliction?" The twelve years of civil war that followed seem a penitential test of both fidelity and endurance. Even with the war now finally over, El Salvador still awaits its resurrection.

Elation, exhilaration, and exhaustion followed this January's peace accord. In February, hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans flooded the plazas of the capital to celebrate the end of the war. The remarkable peace plan brokered by the United Nations' special envoy, Alvaro De Soto, deserves the Nobel peace prize. Among other provisions, it includes reform of the Salvadoran military; a strengthened, independent judiciary; long-term UN observer teams throughout the country to guarantee the accord's implementation; readmission of rebel partisans into civic life; and an international commission to investigate human rights violations committed by both sides during the war.

But not all Salvadorans wish to go gently into the light. The Salvadoran military attempted to short-circuit the peace plan's reform of the national police. Under the UN plan, the national police, the treasury police, and the national guard—all notorious vigilantes with strong ties to right-wing death squads and the army—were to be separated from the military, purged of human rights violators, and reconstituted under legislated civilian control. On the eve of their disbanding, the army suddenly created two new military components, what it called the Frontier Guards and the Military Police, simply subsuming the former groups. Only vociferous protest from the UN observers forced the army to abandon this ruse. Further ruses are to be expected, and further protests will be necessary. The UN plan and its personnel will require international attention and support for a long time.

Nor will real peace come as long as the causes of the war remain at issue. A democratic opening of sorts has developed, with the FMLN ready to take part in electoral politics. The 1990 election in neighboring Nicaragua stands as an example of the kind of political change that can be accomplished by ballots rather than bullets. But the halfhearted land reform pursued by the governing Salvadoran Christian

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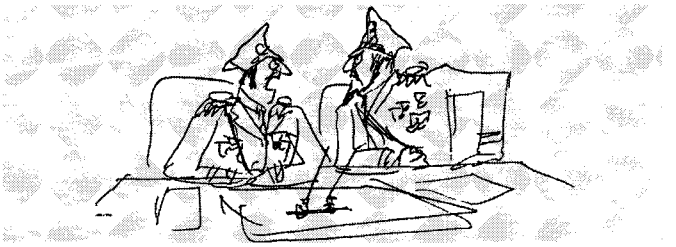

"We're here to sign a peace treaty. 'Drop dead' is hardly the opening wedge we're looking for!"

Democrats in the mid-1980s did not significantly alter land-ownership patterns in El Salvador. Under the present ARENA government, the economic stranglehold exerted on most Salvadorans by the traditional oligarchy persists. The new peace accord, for all the hope it has inspired, does not require more diversified ownership of the land or the means of production. Already absentee landlords have returned to reclaim land distributed to *campesinos* and to drive them out. Once again, under UN pressure a moratorium on such expulsions has been put in place. But the peace accord does not create a mechanism for transfer of the land to those who work it and does not obligate former owners to sell their land. Ongoing antagonisms are real and ominous.

Attempts to organize working men and women, a life-and-death undertaking for previous generations, remain a daunting task. Union organizers continue to be threatened, and one was brutally assassinated by a right-wing death squad following the treaty. Furthermore, the Salvadoran economy is in a shambles. Nearly a million Salvadorans, out of a population of 5.5 million, fled the country during the conflict. These expatriates now send home $700 million a year, more than the country earns from exports for its chief products (coffee, cotton, sugar). According to the *Wall Street Journal* (February 13), an economic rebound will depend heavily on continued international assistance and on whether expatriates, chiefly those in the United States, are allowed to remain abroad to send home a portion of their incomes. Many Salvadorans in the U.S. are now covered by "temporary protected status" (TPS). As of June 30 that status will cease and many will be forced to return to their homeland. The Salvadoran government has requested an extension of TPS on the grounds that their return would increase the financial distress and endanger the peace process, so much so that the Bush administration should extend TPS for at least eighteen months.

The Salvadoran peace, therefore, has just begun. To assure that the process has a real chance, UN and U.S. assistance will be needed in heavy doses. The U.S. in particular has a moral obligation to help. For twelve years we pursued the doctrine of low-intensity warfare, predicated on cold-war ideology. A recent examination by the Rand Corporation concludes that the policy failed ("American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador"). Its two-track approach was inherently conflictual: reforming Salvadoran institutions while simultaneously underwriting a corrupt military which sought to impose order by means of brutal "pacification" campaigns. The cost: death that touched every Salvadoran family; a military stalemate; a depleted economy; ravished health, educational, and transportation systems; and $6 billion in wasted U.S. aid.

Peace in El Salvador, and in all of Central America, requires a dramatic shift in U.S. policy (see J. Bryan Hehir, page 9). As its touchstone, this policy must stress accountability for human rights in the region and proceed from there to a long-overdue, mutual, *multilateral* effort for regional cooperation. In Guatemala, brutal human rights abuses continue to mount and 80 percent of the population lives in extreme poverty; in Panama, corruption remains endemic, despite a U.S. military invasion; in Honduras and El Salvador, bloated militaries suck up substantive portions of the national budgets. With cholera spreading through the region, and with the effects of economic recession taking hold, more than free-trade rhetoric will be required from Washington. Financial assistance from abroad is essential for continued political and economic reform. Yet the aim must be to foster regional solidarity and sufficiency rather than paternalism and continued dependency. Military assistance to El Salvador and the region should be strictly nonlethal in nature and designed to reform and subordinate armies to democratic structures. Only with such programs will Salvadorans and their neighbors be able to build the peace for which they have been longing and dying.

AN EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

LITURGICAL GRIDLOCK

LENT BEGINS IN MANHATTAN

New York City on Ash Wednesday is a bit like a funeral in a fractious family—even the most estranged relatives are eager to put in an appearance. Ash-smeared legions materialize on the sidewalks, as if called from the anonymity of office towers, stores, and subways by some hidden power. Could there really be so many covert ritualists in Manhattan? Or have the tourists been sneaking into the churches just for the fun of it? Threading my way through the dense lunchtime crowds on lower Broadway, I look up and see wave after wave of blotched foreheads bearing down on me in some vague evangelical assault. This must be our way of acknowledging the truth lived by the Amish or the Hasidim, whose anachronistic dress reminds us that the God of the Bible marks visible lives and not merely immaterial ambitions. Religion is customarily such a private matter for Americans; surely it is good ascetic discipline to go forth into the world stigmatized at least once a year.

This past Ash Wednesday I scurried over to St. Peter's Church on Barclay Street, which is just north of the World Trade Center. It was near noon, and I had failed to fully anticipate the bull market for penitential services. Lines from the basement chapel service snaked out the doors on both sides of the building. I made a hasty decision to race back ten short blocks or so to Our Lady of Victory near Wall Street. Taking the exercise in the proper spirit of fleshly mortification, I arrived

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short of breath only to find long lines curling out of Our Lady of Victory. Liturgical gridlock, I can report, had paralyzed lower Manhattan.

I wandered aimlessly for a while, wondering how I had gotten myself into such religious quandaries, and trying out various casuistical excuses for forgoing the whole thing. But the afternoon was as bright and clean as a First Communion dress, putting me in an ecclesial mood. Back I went to St. Peter's, where the statue of a sword-wielding St. Peter always tickles my fancy. *Concede nobis, Domine, praesidia militiae christianae sanctis inchoare jejuniis*—Grant us, O Lord, to begin our Christian warfare with holy fasts—concluded the old blessing of the ashes. With such military encouragement in mind, into the fray I plunged.

By now a Mass was being said upstairs in St. Peter's main church, and the crowd spread higgledy-piggledy across the steep but broad steps descending to the street. I joined what I hoped was a line. Maybe this was the proper way to observe Ash Wednesday after all, for the origin of the practice lies in the ancient rite of physical expulsion from the church for those guilty of serious sin. Dressed in sackcloth and sprinkled with ashes, transgressors were exiled from the community and required to do public penance until Easter. It was something more than metaphor. "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed," the psalm reads. "Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow."

As I stood on the porch under the massive columns of St. Peter's portico, I was joined by an older man, diminutive but brusque. Fidgeting, he craned his neck to see what our prospects were for getting inside the church. While barely acknowledging each other, we edged toward the door. With his worn face and hard eyes, my companion was an identifiable New York type—I cast him as a character out of Damon Runyon—and one of the reasons churchgoing in New York, despite its liturgical blandness, has unexpected rewards. Indeed, the whole madhouse of Ash Wednesday had the reassuring feel of a mundane but tenacious domestic piety. People yacked and joked, murmuring about the gentle absurdity of standing in the street waiting for ashes. Seeing a situation ripe with spiritual paradox, some of the neighborhood's more entrepreneurial beggars canvassed the lines for loose change.

At some point, the line I was in began to move quickly, and rather inexplicably, into the building. I nodded for my companion to go through the door first. He shrugged his shoulders and complied. "Danks," he said.

Before us the packed crowd at the back of the church parted as mysteriously as the Red Sea, and we found ourselves headed down one of the side aisles toward the sanctuary at a very brisk clip. Half-way to the altar my companion stopped, as if halted by an apparition. Turning on his heels, he looked at me with an expression of panic. "Whaaaaat, no ashes!" he exclaimed under his breath. I must have looked rather confused myself, for he nodded his head conspiratorially toward the back of the church. "Aaarrrrrrgggggghhhh," he lamented, "it's Communion."

Impatience, and not scrupulosity, probably kept my acquaintance from Communion that day. But I found the whole riotous opera—right down to the pasty-faced Dunwoodie seminarian who finally daubed me with ashes and admonished me to follow the gospel—reinvigorating. New York speaks so remorselessly of achievement—both material and spiritual—that it is humbling in the best sense of the word to bend a knee in the company of less ambitious sinners. Perhaps I had been sprinkled with hyssop, and even summoned to greater things.

PAUL BAUMANN

CHICAGO SYMPOSIUM

LAVENDER & PURPLE

THE BISHOPS WITH THE GAYS

For at least one newly arrived observer, the New Ways Ministry symposium in Chicago last month created, for a while, an uneasy sense of being an intruder. The theme was "Lesbian and Gay People and Catholicism: The State of the Question." The new arrival was straight; a little slow at catching gay in-jokes, not at all used to seeing men greeting other men with hugs. At the risk of overdramatizing, it was rather like watching a secret society in session, or entering a ghetto whose people become invisible outside the walls: folks just like you and me on the outside, but in many cases, as the pop hit of the '40s had it, "crying on the inside."

But not, perhaps, at this meeting. It was an upbeat, down-home weekend, the third sponsored by New Ways Ministry, which was founded in 1977 as an "educational and bridge-building ministry of reconciliation" between the homosexual community and Catholic institutions. The symposium was endorsed by seventy-plus religious communities (mostly women's orders) and other organizations, including the National Federation of Priests' Councils. However advertised, and whatever the state of the question, the meeting was geared to affirmation of the gay and lesbian experience.

Participants ranged from church professionals, lay and religious, to leaders of Dignity, a national Catholic gay and lesbian organization which was denied the use of church property after a 1986 Vatican statement—referred to among them as the "Halloween document." The meeting was evenly divided by gender. According to the organizers, one-third of those attending were priests or religious, another third were lay church workers, and the rest were "other" (lay people not employed by the church, members of Dignity and other organizations).

Three of the symposium speakers were bishops, and that provided the meeting with an éclat that only purple can give. Bishop Willam A. Hughes of Covington, Kentucky, chaired the bishops' task force on AIDS in 1987 and, by his own testimony, has not been the same since in his response to the gay community. Bishop Kenneth Untener (Saginaw, Michigan) is known for his views on issues affecting women in the ministry, among other issues.

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And Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, auxiliary in Detroit, has spoken out on issues of peace and justice. All are "pastoral" rather than doctrinal types (though Untener is a theologian), and their task at the meeting was to talk about "the pastoral reality" of the gay and lesbian question. Other general-session speakers addressed psychological, historical, and ethical issues.

Sister Fran Ferder, a clinical psychologist from Seattle, noted that only (*only?*) the Judeo-Christian culture and "a few Eastern religions" reject gay and lesbian life, while Eskimos and others accord special respect to the bisexual as a wise person who knows both sides of humanity. "Can we learn something from this?" she asked. And answered, "probably."

John E. Boswell, a Yale historian and author of the widely acclaimed *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality,* reported on his current research and the subject of his next book, same-sex marriage ceremonies in the Christian church. A number of his examples came from twelfth-century Ireland, where "brawny warriors" tied the knot with benefit of clergy. A waggish commentator from the floor observed in a slight brogue that this may help explain why, when Irish eyes are smiling, the world is bright and gay.

Sister Margaret A. Farley, ethicist, and also of Yale, offered argument and analysis pretty much paving the way for the acceptance of homosexual behavior—no matter, as she asserted, what Richard A. McCormick and other liberal moral theologians may say in criticism of homosexual behavior. Quoting McCormick, who has done some way-paving in his day in heterosexual morality, she characterized several of his arguments opposing homosexuality as simple assertion. "How can we know?" she asked. Citing major changes in Catholic sexual ethics in this century, including jettisoning of the "procreative norm" by acceptance of the rhythm method of birth control, she asked, "Where's the trajectory?" clearly implying that the best (or worst) is yet to come.

In this setting, the three bishops were odd men out. They had no brave new world to offer, like Farley, nor a surprising old one to describe, like Boswell. Their very modest message was to reach out and affirm gays and lesbians as individuals while refraining from explicit comment on the issues raised by other speakers. Citing a dozen statements on the matter from all points on the (narrow) episcopal spectrum, Untener pointed to the complexity of the issue. And, without getting specific, he worried about a "drift back to severity." (The next day, the complexity issue was the topic of a few wry, even somewhat mocking comments.)

"No person is a category," said Hughes, like Untener emphasizing that the church has room for all types: "Jesus ate and drank with publicans and sinners," he said. We are to make "no judgments about a person because we know his or her orientation....Nor is all homosexual activity subjectively sinful for all at all times....No one but God can judge the sinfulness of acts." And he quoted: "The intrinsic dignity of each person must always be respected" (this, astonishingly, from the "Halloween document," the 1986 statement of Cardinal Ratzinger's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which led to the clamp-down on Dignity-sponsored liturgies).

Gumbleton was more personal. After his brother revealed to their family he was gay, Gumbleton had refused to visit him. The bishop was eventually moved from his intransigency by a seventy-year-old widow whose son had died of AIDS. She helped the bishop become "more accepting" of his brother and his brother's partner, and made it possible for him to console his own mother, "trained well in the teachings of the church," about her gay son, for whose salvation she feared.

Now this was cutting to the bone. So was Gumbleton's opening remark: "Certain church authorities are not happy we bishops are here today. We must be careful what we say." Or Untener's: "It was not entirely easy for me to come."

Or Hughes in an interview: "Some want us to affirm [homosexual behavior], but we can't do it. We must deal with them as individuals in a pastoral way."

Like the up-to-date Kansas City residents in *Oklahoma*, these three bishops went about as far as they could go.

JIM BOWMAN

Jim Bowman, former religion editor of the Chicago Daily News, *is now a free-lance writer.*

NATIONAL SERVICE ACT

RENEWING COMMUNITY

WHEN CONGRESS DOES IT RIGHT

The Congress of the United States is now on record as wanting to change the way Americans view community service. Without intending it, judges have for many years been giving community service a bad name. White-collar criminals and errant public officials have, in exchange for their venality or violations of the public trust, been sentenced to punitive doses of "community service" in lieu of spending time in jail. That kind of judicial sentence will, of course, not disappear; regrettably, it will retain the name "community service." But by enacting the National and Community Service Act of 1990, Congress has said it wants to "enhance" community service and "renew the ethic of civic responsibility in the United States."

Community service is now to be encouraged as a matter of public policy. It is a responsibility to be met, not a punishment to be avoided. Service, we may soon discover, can help reduce some of our national and personal discontent and may well assist significantly in the reduction of many of our vexing and persistent social problems. In any case, government at local, state, and federal levels is expected now to foster service—voluntary and, if not altogether uncompensated, modestly stipended service—in local communities and the nation as a whole.

As is often the case when a bill clears both houses of Congress, the final product represents an amalgam of legislative ideas compacted into a single law. In this case, Public Law 101-610—November 16, 1990—provides funding for service activ-

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ities to be performed by school-aged children (K-12), by college and university students, by out-of-school youth, and by adults of all ages.

It took years to get a national service bill through the Congress. Over the years, the Senate was much more interested than the House in the notion of national service and Democrats were more willing than Republicans to discuss and debate the idea. Consequently, the bill produced by a Democratic Congress, passed with bipartisan support, and signed by President George Bush, has identifiable Democratic parentage and pride of authorship. Hence, influential Democrats will have an ongoing interest in seeing how "their" program is doing, especially that portion that was "his" (Senators Kennedy, Nunn, and Dodd, for example) or "her" (Senator Mikulski) idea. These senators and others (notably Democrats Pell, Robb, Graham, and Bumpers, and Republicans Hatch, Durenberger, and Jeffords) will be watching as money moves out ($73 million in FY '92) from the Commission on National and Community Service, a small new independent agency established by the 1990 Act. Funds will be awarded to the states, Indian tribes, and institutions of higher education for:

- Serve-America ($16.9 million in FY '92 for statewide, school-aged service-learning programs);
- Higher Education Innovative Projects ($5.6 million in FY'92 to encourage students to participate in community service activities while attending college);
- Conservation and Youth Service Corps ($22.5 million for youths age sixteen to twenty-five willing to commit themselves to up to twenty-four months of full-time service, for environmental or human needs); and
- National and Community Service ($22.5 million for persons seventeen years of age or older who would work for not less than three years on a part-time basis, or one year on a full-time basis, "to meet unmet educational, human, environmental, and public safety needs, especially those needs relating to poverty").

The last program can fairly be described as that segment of the program "belonging" to Senators Barbara Mikulski and Sam Nunn. Senator Edward M. Kennedy contributed "Serve-America" to this legislative amalgam. The "Higher Education Innovative Projects" section bears the imprint of Senators Kennedy and Claiborne Pell. And the "Conservation and Youth Service Corps" ideas come chiefly from the legislative imagination of Senator Christopher Dodd.

As funds move out from Washington and programs are initiated across the nation, legislators will want to evaluate the results. Some of the results can be quantified with relative ease: How many programs? How many volunteers? How many poor people were involved? What are the cost-benefit ratios? Did the programs attract middle-class volunteers? Did school-age participants stay in school? Did participants gain genuine job skills? Were paid workers displaced by volunteers? Were volunteers simply rearranged—i.e., was there a net increase in volunteer activity or did these new programs simply attract participants from preexisting volunteer programs? What effect did these programs have on military recruiting? (There is fear in the House of Representatives that they will compete with recruitment for the armed forces.) How about the effect on student loan obligations? Do postservice benefits like mortgage subsidies and education grants attract participants?

On the qualitative side, some sponsors of this legislation, notably Senators Mikulski and Kennedy, will want to know whether the programs do, in fact, foster a community-service ethic. If they do, the nation can expect to see a continuum of service over the course of the lifetime of persons attracted to such service programs in their formative years. Similarly, the legislators will want to know whether service experiences can actually change a poor youth's life. A large legislative bet has been placed on the potential of this act to have precisely that effect.

In thinking about evaluation, it occurred to me that one might look upon the various programs of this legislative venture much as one views the entries in a horse race. As various programs are funded, one might visualize the Kennedy horse, the Mikulski horse, the Dodd horse, and other entries with identifiable legislative "colors," breaking away from the starting gate and running for the results their sponsors had envisioned. But even if the programs were sufficiently pure-bred to display distinctive legislative origins, it would not be possible to attribute success or failure on the basis of one short race, and probably not fair to run them head-to-head against each other.

Perhaps a horse show would be a more useful analogy: The distinctive features of each could be ascertained, the potential

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for each program realizing its objectives estimated, and, one way or the other, the results finally measured and evaluated.

It would be a mistake, however, to attempt to measure the success of these various initiatives primarily in terms of reduced rates of teen-age pregnancy, a decline in drug abuse, a drop in youth unemployment, or other positive social indicators. Families, schools, religious and other institutions, not least among them the private job market, cannot look to this modest program and expect it to carry the freight of social recovery for troubled youth in a troubled nation. True, community service could become *part* of a national job-training strategy. True, community service might be successful in attracting nontraditional volunteers—i.e., low-income people—into organized volunteer activity. But society's basic institutions have to do the foundational work required to produce enduring social change.

Washington lawyer Richard Danzig, coauthor of *National Service: What Is It?* (Lexington Books, 1986), advised the evaluation committee of the commission during a December 17, 1991 White House meeting, that the evaluative emphasis should be on the "first order" questions, not on the larger issues of societal change. In Danzig's view, there are three central criteria for measuring the success of these programs: recruiting, rewards, results. Do the programs recruit a range of people? Are improved self-esteem and a sense of altruism among the rewards a participant gains from the service experience? What are the results of the program for the persons being served?

Another consultant to the commission's committee on evaluation—Jerome Kolker, director of the Philadelphia-based Urban Corps Expansion Project of an organization called Public/Private Ventures—emphasized the importance of engaging young people in activities that meet genuine community needs while lifting their own self-esteem. These two problems—unmet community needs and widespread deficits in self-esteem among the young—have one solution, he said, and that solution is service.

I agree that service is a singular solution in this and in at least two other important ways. It looks to the individual: One person can make a difference. When many persons freely choose to unite their efforts in service to others, they can make an enormous difference. Moreover, the fact that the service envisioned in this act is voluntary, or only modestly stipended, makes it all the more singular in the culture of greed that appears to be tightening its grip on the nation. The possibility of a social revolution is latent in the complicated provisions of this legislation. They could open the way for us to become a nation that cares about service.

Applications for funding are now being filed in each of the Act's four major categories and grants from the commission (529 14th Street, N.W., Suite 452, Washington, D.C. 20045) will be made by early June 1992. It will be a number of Junes, however, until we have a good idea of whether or not the worthy objectives of this welcome public policy initiative are being realized.

WILLIAM J. BYRON

William J. Byron, S.J., is president of The Catholic University of America and a member of the board of directors of the Commission on National and Community Service.

'LET'S TALK ABOUT JESUS'

WAYNE'S WAY

TUNING IN & TURNING ON

I spend about an hour or two each week during lunchtime listening to a syndicated radio call-in program called "Let's Talk about Jesus." This program is hosted by a nondenominational evangelical minister named Wayne Monbleau.

Wayne, as everyone calls him, is very Jesus-centered. In the advice he gives to the troubled people who call in, he always stresses the love of God for the caller and the new life he or she has in Jesus Christ.

Well-read in the literature of Catholic spirituality as well as that of other religions, Wayne is no stereotypical evangelical. He has no toleration for denominational sniping or doctrinal hairsplitting of any kind. In fact, he is not too enamored with organized religion in general. The love of God for the individual and the world as expressed in the Incarnation is Wayne's watchword, if not his obsession.

Frequent callers to "Let's Talk about Jesus" begin their conversation with Wayne with the words, "I was raised a Catholic, but...." When I hear this my hand instinctively reaches to turn the dial because I know I'm in for a dose of Catholic-bashing.

However, these people may have something important to tell those of us who remain in the church. Many times they say they left because they weren't told about Jesus; they weren't told about the love of God. This is especially ironic because these same ex-Catholic callers to "Let's Talk about Jesus," as well as others, often question Wayne about attitudes and problems Catholic tradition dealt with centuries ago.

For instance, one woman called in recently who had been dropped from a ministry team at her church because she smokes cigarettes; some people are taught by their churches that if they name and claim what they want with enough faith they will get it—if they don't get it, they didn't have enough faith; others call in with screwball, do-it-yourself Scripture interpretations.

By and large, Wayne seems to bring light, love, and consolation to his callers; listening to him in the middle of a hectic day usually points me back toward Jesus as "the way, the truth, and the life."

Still, I can't help but wish sometimes for a similar ministry that wouldn't be as dismissive of intellectual questioning, a ministry that could draw comfortably upon the whole two-thousand-year spiritual and intellectual history of Christianity. Moreover, Wayne obviously loves Jesus so much that I often wish he and his listeners had the opportunity to hear more about his presence in the Eucharist. To my knowledge, however, the U.S. Catholic church runs no similar gospel-oriented radio ministry, nor have I heard of plans to start one. This inactivity continues despite

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calls from Vatican II, Pope Paul VI, and Pope John Paul II for the increased use of mass media for evangelization. Why aren't we talking to the world about our faith?

In a recent essay on evangelization in *America* magazine (February 1, 1992), Avery Dulles, S.J., cites an "excessive preoccupation with inner-church issues" among Catholics today. A look at the Catholic publications I receive in the mail each week indicates that this preoccupation exists.

Judging by many of these magazines and newspapers, the most pressing problems facing the American church and world today include academic freedom at Catholic universities, the ordination of women and married men, contraception, and abuses (real and imagined) by the Vatican. Many Catholic liberal elites in the U.S. seem obsessed by institutional political power in the church; many conservatives seem obsessed with the purity of doctrine on what are essentially peripheral matters compared to the Good News.

In many Catholic circles, the struggle for institutional power or winning debating points seems to have eclipsed such quaint tasks as loving God with one's whole heart, mind, and strength, and one's neighbor as oneself. Meanwhile, one of five children in the United States grows up in poverty; abortion is rampant; consumerism rules while the sick, elderly, and mentally ill languish unvisited in dreary and inadequate institutions; a recent poll indicates that a majority of American Catholics don't know who preached the Sermon on the Mount.

The Catholics who call "Let's Talk about Jesus" don't complain about misused authority in the church on the Left or Right; they usually call because they are hurting from one or more of the following: sin, addiction, death, depression, divorce, disease, or unemployment. What they most often need and what Wayne tries to give them is the simple knowledge that God loves them with an everlasting love, that life has meaning, that physical death is not the end, that grace is there to help them through.

We believe that, don't we? And to that, the Catholic church can add two-thousand years of accumulated wisdom, countless examples of sanctity, and the sacraments. Let's talk about Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega. Let's start acting like we have an amazing piece of good news to share with the poor, the oppressed, the depressed, the sick, and the lost.

MARK RONDEAU

Mark Rondeau is a newspaper reporter in Monmouth County, New Jersey

WORLD WATCH

J. Bryan Hehir

SAYING NO TO SLAUGHTER

CONGRESSMAN OBEY'S MODEST VICTORIES

It would appear that neither American public opinion nor the U.S. political process has any time for issues of foreign policy. The presidential campaigns are devoid of foreign policy questions; the precarious state of the economy—experienced for millions of Americans through unemployment or the threat of it—the Savings and Loan debacle, and the widespread public reaction to a series of congressional self-inflicted wounds, have driven the rest of the world from American political discourse.

It is highly unlikely that the dominance of domestic issues will change even after the parties have decided on their candidates. The election will be contested on the grounds of economic security and stability in a country trying to adapt to new patterns of economic competition. The fact that the new economic reality facing the country is tied to wider international economic relationships is acknowledged but the debate is domestically focused.

The world, however, is with us whether we pay attention to it or not. And some of what is transpiring is cause for at least modest optimism.

The end of the cold war has been judged in the United States principally in terms of the declining nuclear danger to both superpowers, and in terms of what the post-Soviet Union will finally look like. But a different consequence of the collapse of the cold war has been its effect on a number of regional conflicts throughout the world. From Central America, to Southern Africa, to the Middle East the last twenty years have been a time of war, insurgency, brutal devastation of the civilian population, and economic catastrophe. These regional wars have all had local roots and causes—a fact not always recognized by U.S. policy. But the cold-war competition invariably made the regional wars more intense, more destructive, and very resistant to resolution.

The end of the cold war, in turn, has had a dramatic effect on regional conflicts. In Cambodia, Afghanistan, Southern Africa, and the Middle East, long-standing, intractable problems began to yield to negotiation and mediation. To some degree the old superpowers have contributed to the shift from war to diplomacy, but the dominant institution has been the United States.

Central America is the principal example of this phenomenon. As the church in Central America said often, the roots of conflict in the 1980s were sunk in the soil of economic injustice, political oppression, and gross violations of human rights. But the U.S.-Soviet competition escalated the local conflict to a qualitatively different level of violence. Archbishop Rivera y

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Damas of San Salvador captured the reality when he said that outsiders supplied the guns and Salvadorans provided the casualties. For a full decade, 1979-1989, the war in Central America reached from the killing fields of El Salvador and Nicaragua to the halls of the U.S. Congress. Each year at this time—often, ironically, during Holy Week—the appropriations battles would be fought in congressional committees about military and economic aid to El Salvador and/or U.S. aid to the *contras* in Nicaragua. Year in and year out congressional hearings would be pitched battles, often between the church communities and the Reagan administration over aid to Central America.

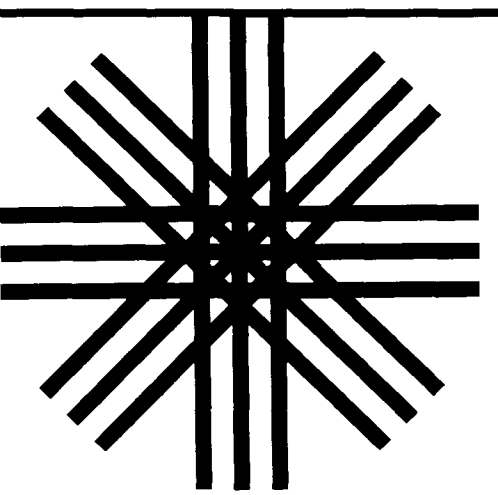
It is useful to contrast this pattern—which consumed the 1980s—with the reality of the 1990s. The end of the cold war and the exhaustion—physically and ideologically—of the parties in El Salvador has produced a peace process under U.N. auspices. A cease-fire has been in effect since February, a complex series of internal reforms is being negotiated, and proposals for both local and international efforts to rebuild a ravaged economy are being formulated.

In this new context it is important to attend to the Foreign Aid Appropriation which has just passed the U.S. Congress. The El Salvador section was fashioned in the House Appropriations Committee under the leadership of Congressman David Obey (D-Wis.), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations. Obey is a veteran of the Central America debate, and those who tried for the past decade to contain U.S. policy, to refocus it from military to political and economic measures, owe Obey a debt of gratitude. In concert with a core group of House and Senate members, Obey fought the trench warfare in congressional committees to refashion U.S. policy throughout the 1980s. He used his committee hearings to debate the substantive issues of U.S. policy, and he used the crucial if limited role of his chairmanship to oppose escalation of U.S. involvement in Central America.

This year, he and others have shaped an appropriation which will: (1) limit military aid to nonlethal items and use such aid to reduce and restructure the role of the Salvadoran armed forces; and (2) transfer over $63 million from military aid to the task of reconstruction of the Salvadoran economy and retraining of former combatants for civil life. Obey met resistance from some Central American support groups in the United States because his provisions did not simply cut off all military aid. The critique fails on two grounds: (1) the votes to simply cut off military aid were—to the best of my knowledge—not there; and (2), the present legislation gives the U.S. Congress some continued leverage in pushing ahead the reduction of the Salvadoran military.

In addition to the specific provisions on military aid, Obey's efforts to fashion a long-term U.S. policy toward Central America deserve support. Precisely because the U.S. political debate is focused so heavily on domestic issues, there is a real possibility Central America will be just forgotten here. The peace process must include the reconstruction dimension; but reconstruction is not possible in El Salvador without outside assistance. One estimate is that $2 billion is needed to provide the possibility for life beyond war in a country which lost 75,000 lives over the last decade.

U.S. policy of the 1980s incurred a moral obligation for the future. Much of what the U.S. did was misguided and counterproductive. Those who believe that of the 1980s have both the opportunity and the obligation to shape a different kind of engagement in the 1990s. The new legislation is a first step, but other steps of larger proportion will be needed. Obey and his colleagues need and deserve on-going public support. □



THE GRAYMOOR PRIZE

The Friars of the Atonement announce the third annual Graymoor Prize, to be awarded to the best essay on any aspect of ecumenical or interreligious affairs. Original and unpublished essays of approximately 2,500-4,000 words should be submitted to the editors of COMMONWEAL. The winning essay will receive a prize of $1,000 and will be published in COMMONWEAL.

Deadline: October 1, 1992. Announcement of Prize: December 18, 1992. The prize-winning essay will be published in COMMONWEAL's January 15, 1993 issue. This essay will become the property of the Graymoor Ecumenical Institute. All other essays will be returned to their authors after January 1.

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EASTER: HAS IT MADE A DIFFERENCE?

THE EVIDENCE IS MIXED

WILLIAM J. REWAK

During this Easter season, we celebrate the heart of Christianity: the victory of life over death, the resolution of suffering in the healing power of the risen Lord. That is what we believe in faith.

But a persistent difficulty presents itself: if the cross can be considered a "scandal," how much more the Resurrection? For what has it accomplished? What difference has it made in history? If the Resurrection is truly liberation and victory, why are Christians—let alone the rest of humanity—still locked in primitive prisons of sin and prejudice and fraternal homicide? (And it is fraternal: if we do not all recognize we are one family under God, we at least know we are socially and economically interdependent.) Has the grace of the Resurrection made any advance on the shore of our stubbornness?

At every major Christian moment in the calendar, this question seems to stand in relief. For the calendar reminds us to celebrate salvation, but experience tells us that the history of humanity is increasingly the history of victimization. Children are victims of violence and pornography; whole races are victims of prejudice and expediency; the living unborn who, it seems, have no rights, are victims of convenience and of those who insist on their own rights; the first world is a victim of wealth and the other worlds are victims of poverty and illiteracy. We are all victims of our addictions and we all suffer from our misuse of the environment.

Who is not a victim? And who does not victimize?

And yet Christ, we believe, became a victim precisely to free us from that servitude. Are we liberated or not?

Christianity exists only because of the Resurrection. An obvious proposition, but it is necessary to remind ourselves of that because if suffering and death have in no way been defeated, then—to paraphrase St. Paul—the Resurrection is a non-event, and Christianity is a sham.

The catechism answer is that, with faith, we know that Christ did rise but that final victory and power will come after death—just as it did for Jesus—when evil will be punished and good rewarded. An acceptable, eschatological answer: things will iron themselves out later, so put up with victimization now. A better show is around the corner.

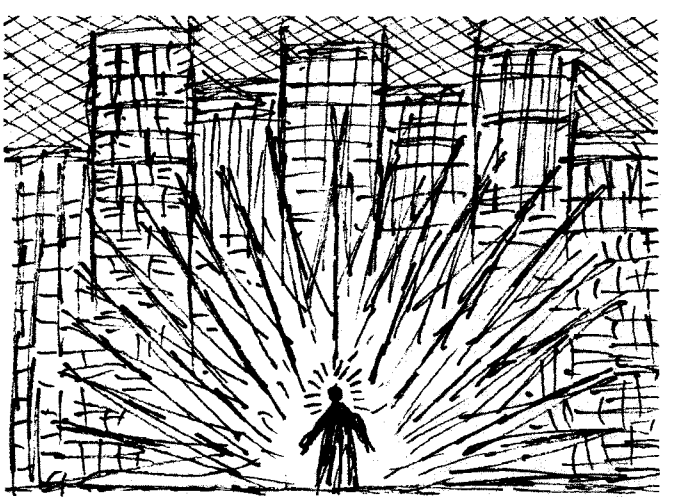
That may be too flippant, for the eschatological state of mind is certainly a valid one. Given the historical reality of our mutual inhumanity, it seems reasonable and proper that any religion worth its salt should offer hope. Death is obviously the end of one's existence in the world as we know it; any faith that wants to be taken seriously must therefore offer some alternative to personal annihilation. That alternative has, traditionally, been a life after death.

Such hope is well-nigh universal. The Resurrection of Jesus speaks to that hope. Because he rose, we know—we believe—that we will.

However, the problem lies in our perception that such power and grace, exploding into our world on Easter morning, has made little appreciable effect on our world, and that in order to justify our faith we must relegate the effect of that power and grace to the next world.

If God somehow burst into history, ought we not to see the scars?

Faith is a grace in itself: we cannot, by definition, prove the object of faith. If we could, we would not need faith. So while it may seem simplistic, while it may appear to be begging the



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question, the counsel that we must finally submit to faith—that the Resurrection is ultimately a matter of personal belief—is quite legitimate. Legitimacy does not render faith easy, but no one has ever said it would be.

But faith does need encouragement. It needs signs. When Jesus healed the sick, he was manifesting a human compassion, but he was also giving a sign so that those who followed him could begin to understand him. We should not be pharisaical and demand signs; on the other hand, Jesus himself said that no sign shall be given except that of Jonah—the coming to life of someone believed dead. The Resurrection is, therefore, a sign. As the effective power of grace, it is far more than a sign, but should we not see that effective power, in some way, acting as a sign of the Lord's presence among us?

If the Resurrection justified the suffering of the cross, ought we not to see how suffering has changed?

When we look around at the events we experience or the people we know, we must ask ourselves, "What in my life helps me to believe that Jesus is here, that the power of his risen presence is pressing down on us, lifting us up?"

Are there any signs at all?

Yes, I believe there are. In spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, grace does have a foothold. I speak, of course, as a Christian with faith, but also as a benevolent skeptic who would like to find, as Mary Magdalene did, that something is very different on this Easter morning. So I admit to myself that any signs are dim; they are not conclusive. But that is all right, for it is reasonable to accept that faith will fill in the picture, and that faith even changes its entire perspective.

Is the church itself one of the signs of the Resurrection? We

Marie Ponsot

Even

Were there cliffs cupping Eden?
I think it so just high enough
for the travel of shadows and echoes

Vegetal animal
Eden was nothing
Adam was nothing

Animal vegetal
he is on stage a while
before he speaks

From wing to wing
air lifts and rustles
The light is general
a wonderful consonance

Adam wakes present
in the present tense
to his present Eve

Eve comes to

Adam was nothing
not even lonely till
Eve came to
listening

In Eve's eyes
Adam is faced

Each is the only equal
They stand definite
the same in their luminous skins
their faces regarded the same

Adam is/Eve is
nothing much yet but
by their same difference
Eden is seen to be everywhere
What they see is Eden
Being

Eve came to invent us
invent audience
taking in hearing
she came to hear him:
sponsa
respondens

the birth of responsible life

He would hear her
she would be there to hear

With trial of consonants
labials gutterals stops
out of breath
Adam begins: Br. Sh. Th. Kr.

The names stick.
The air waits. Eden
fades the beasts
stop short the river
threatens to harden.
Adam's skull
stammers & hurts

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should be honest and admit that as an institution it is not always an overpowering sign of Jesus' presence. Individual churchmen are, certainly. Archbishop Oscar Romero, assassinated as he prays the healing words of the Eucharist, seems the quintessence of that strange co-incidence of suffering and glory that periodically in our history echoes the events of Holy Week. As one who was captured by the faith in which the church lives, he witnessed to the church's legitimacy and its perdurance.

But if it were not for people like him, the visible institutional church would have a hard time convincing humanity of its sacred character (we can be awed by the bowing and protocol, by fine cloth of gold and magnificent, frescoed hallways, but that sort of awe is ephemeral; what we seek is the awe-full majesty of a God who walks in humility). For there is much about the organizational church that is still too pharisaical. It is much too concerned about position and place, about control; it depends too much on rules; it does not trust enough in the power of the risen Lord. Indeed, it operates sometimes as if it doubts his presence and must compensate by creating a system of overbearing jurisdiction.

Much of the history of the organizational church is too embarrassing to be seriously considered a sign of Jesus' presence: schism, jealousies, debilitating wealth, murder in the name of religion, a harsh domination of people's consciences. Sometimes it has seemed that his presence is known only by indirection: we say to ourselves, "Jesus has to be here, it would never have lasted this long otherwise." But indirection is not a sign to be proud of.

Eve opens her ears

She is listening

On the waves the whorls embraced
Adam came to her mind
as the sound of Adam

Her throat aches

a great longing
"Ah" she replied

"ah"

o Eve is out-pouring
vowels & verbs

Eve's pour-out of breath
loosens openings & interlude
fluency silence

Aren't they something

Each is the only equal
and the speaking listener

Eden's creatures, eased, began flexing
out of their names their spines & joints
crackled & shone acting in syntax
answering her answering
flowering vines
hung fruited with stories

Through each other
microscope telescope
they look at the garden

Landscape enlarges them

the oxen lift their knees
the baboon flaunts its pink
the various frogs
touch the high pitch & low
of audible sound Their range
arranges them articulate

Syllables act on
the two who hearing say
Syllable action
syntaction how touching
what tact
Invented by listening
sound invents silence

The breeze drags fragrance through consensual intervals
of air.

Their gaze (contained by cliffs)
looked not down but across
neither upwards but on the level
at Eden each other.
Journeys
never occurred to them even at evening
when often the only Other arrived
and together they breathed in,
breathed that in

They breathe that in
they keep on breathing

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I believe strongly in the institutional church, for we all need to be taught, we need road signals, we need consensus. Someone has to lead and be a burning witness for the rest of us. Law—the structure of how we should do things legitimately—is necessary for human life and an indispensable part of any effective organization. And organizations need instrumentality: offices and cars and paper and fax machines. But the church, because it is administered by human beings, suffers from the same faults as does any other organization: it can easily lose itself in structure and forget the fire at its heart. That fire is all. It should burn through creation and make things new. At times the fire is smothered.

But—at moments—it burns.

When two people stand together before God and vow to love one another for as long as they shall live, with all the seriousness and hope they can muster, they are living the primal commandment, "Love God, love your neighbor," in as complete a fashion as they are capable of. When love is expressed that way, within an awareness that life is uncertain, we must surely know that God loves us. The human does reflect the power of grace.

I think of a moment, once, when I stood backstage with Mother Teresa after she had just spoken to a huge crowd about a man who had crawled to her home in Calcutta to die so that he would not be lost in an alleyway (she is filled with stories of suffering and of human indomitability). She turned to me and said, "Teach the students to love God. Teach them that is all they need to do—love God." The simplicity of her statement, the intensity of it, and the unblinking humility of her eyes: these are signs. She and her nuns are signs, when they lift the children from the gutters, when they wash the dying, of the remarkable co-incidence of suffering and glory—of death and honor—that reflects the power of the cross and the Resurrection. There is no doubt they love those to whom they minister, and that the love of God is present. These people, as part of the institutional church, legitimize the church.

I think of an old man—with brows and chin like mine—who lies inertly, strapped to his bed, uncertain of the time, who with difficulty turns his head to ask, "Are we there yet?"

I think of a woman, in a small suburban parish church, almost bent double in pain, who yet experienced real joy—you could see it—when she approached for Communion.

And of a Jesuit priest, Rutilio Grande, who several years ago on his way to say Mass in a small village in El Savador was ambushed and murdered. He knew the risks, he understood the threats, but he valued his people's needs more than his life. And such a sacrifice does not spring from pride, from self-aggrandizement; it springs from humility that, in itself, is a sign.

These people, as part of the institutional church, as the embers that keep it burning, legitimize the church.

My faith in Jesus springs, in other words, from contemplating the church as a family of travelers, searching for understanding, praying for faith, rejoicing in an illumination however brief, risking life in those moments when not to risk it would be to lose everything. My faith depends on those moments when an inner eye sees more than what I can touch. It depends on those small steps, sometimes unnoticeable in history, that inch toward healing.

We would like the whole world to surge with the power of the light that broke through the stone that Easter morning, but, for some reason, it does not do that. Something is incomplete.

So suffering remains. Victimization will not end. Death will happen, and it will continue to defy faith. No magic structure—religious, economic, or political—will be discovered to compensate for the stubbornness of evil. Violence has not lessened since that first Easter.

But perhaps it can be said that the moments of grace have increased. It may be too soon to say that history has or has not been changed, or that it will change. All we can definitely point to are those signs of humility, the signs of reaching that tell us some one of the travelers has touched a life different from what the world knew before Jesus and that such a touching gives us reason to hope that the desire for a better history is not in vain.

But we must remember, lest we expect an enlightened Lazarus around every corner, that though the green of spring may startle us with hope, there is no definitive spring this side of the world's grave. Something finally has to burst in from the outside, as it did, once, on Easter morning. □

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MORTAL TERROR, GRATEFUL HOPE

ITALIAN JEWS UNDER FASCISM

PHILIP P. HALLIE

We human beings tend to want to get our stories straight. As Aristotle put it at the very beginning of his *Metaphysics*, "All men naturally have an impulse to get knowledge." Insistent, fragmentary memories goad us into finding out what really happened in our own lives, and dramatic public events make us want to know history. And so we rack our memories, we ask our friends and relatives, and we read newspapers and history books, not always because it is useful or profitable to do these things, but also because we are just curious.

Some of us are particularly interested in getting the story of Hitler's twelve-year empire straight. Some want to do it mainly out of "an impulse to get knowledge." But others want to understand what happened in Europe from 1933 to 1945 because the story of this period of time serves an important purpose: It writes ethics large by giving us names and places and stories of both murderous torturers and courageous helpers.

One of the martyrs of this period, the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, put it this way in his classic book *Ethics*:

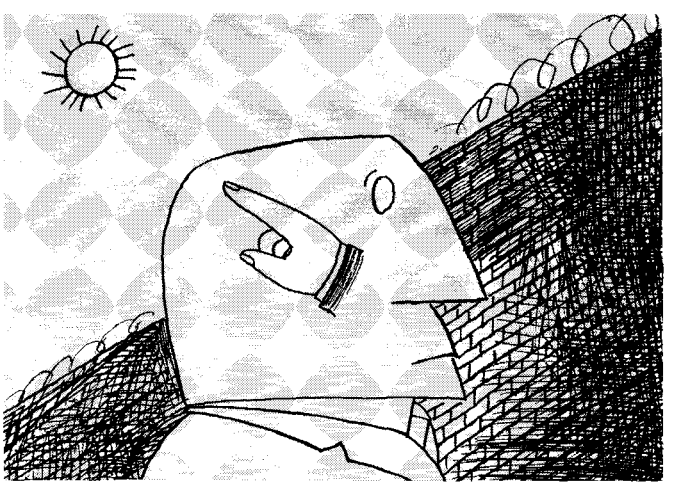
> Today there are once more villains and saints, and they are not hidden from public view. Instead of the uniform greyness of the rainy day we now have the black storm-cloud and the brilliant lightning-flash. The outlines stand out with exaggerated sharpness.... Shakespeare's characters walk in our midst....

But history, like ethics, involves more than lucidity; it involves passionate perspectives. The whole story of a time when tens of millions of human beings—many of them small children—were murdered has yet to be told by a totally disinterested, objective historian. And the evil and the good that happened then have yet to be demonstrated with the impartial finality of a geometrical proof. Whether we like it or not, flesh-and-blood people with their own perspectives write and read history and make ethical judgments.

Believing this as I do, it was with pleasure that I read the first sentence of the introduction to Alexander Stille's *Benevolence and Betrayal*: "I owe both my name and my existence to Mussolini's racial laws." When I read it I thought: "Well, here is somebody who is telling us—up front—where he is coming from!" And what follows that first sentence did not disappoint me. Stille tells us how in Italy his father, a Jew, and his father's closest friend started writing a magazine column after Mussolini had promulgated the racist laws of 1938, laws that barred Jews from publishing their writings. The two young men wrote their column under a pseudonym: Ugo Stille. "*Stille*" means "silence" in German, and anonymity was the closest these two young Italians wanted to get to silence.

In 1941 Alexander Stille's father left Italy for America. The other "Ugo Stille," who was a Catholic, stayed in Italy, and he was killed in one of the early actions of the Italian Resistance. When the war was over Alexander's father made "Stille" his legal name. The name was an enduring bond not only with his past in Italy, but with his dead friend.

One of the reasons Alexander Stille's story struck home for me was that it resembled the story behind my own name. In the nineteenth century my father's father was the only survivor of a pogrom against his tiny Jewish village south of Riga, in what is now Latvia. He was a very young child, not more than two years old, sitting in the ruins of the village when two childless Irish Catholic missionaries happened to pass near the village, and heard him crying. They took him to their home in Daugavpils, and raised him as a son, without putting any pressure on him to become a Catholic. When he was about ten years old, they received a letter from America urging them to send the boy to his Jewish relatives in Chicago. The relatives had somehow found



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out where he was living in Russia. They wanted the boy to come to America so that he could have his *Bar Mitzvah*, and become a full-fledged Jew, the only survivor of his family. The missionaries bought my grandfather a new suit of clothes, and a boat ticket out of Riga for New York. On the way to Riga the boy started to cry, and asked the people who had saved him what he could do to show his appreciation and his love. They said that the most important thing in their lives was their devotion to the Roman Catholic faith; but of course it would make no sense for him to become a Roman Catholic on his way to taking his *Bar Mitzvah*! The boy then asked if he could take their name. They gave him permission, and when he got to Castle Garden in New York City an immigration official asked him for his name, and the boy said "Isidore Hallie." From that time on my grandfather insisted that Hallie was his real, his only name. For him the name "Hallie" was a bond with the people who had saved his life and who had refused to try to convert him to the faith that was so dear to them.

One's name has, perhaps, the meaning one gives it, but it also has the meaning that its history gives it. To me my name is a reminder that, to use Stille's words, "I owe both my name and my existence" to murderous people and to loving ones, to Judaism and to Catholicism, to a wider community than any one ethnic or religious group. I am the product of good and evil people. And the further I read into Stille's book the more I came to believe that his name is a similar bond for him.

And the further I read the more I felt—rightly or wrongly—that Stille and I share a more particular feeling: a lingering, complex feeling of mortal terror and grateful hope. In *All's Well that Ends Well* Shakespeare described that feeling neatly when he wrote: "The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together." But his image is too pat to express the agony of fear and buoyancy that my name carries with it for me. Again and again my father has told me what his father told him about the murderous pogrom south of Daugavpils, and again and again he has told me what his father told him about the Irish missionaries who saved him, body and soul. I have read about the massacres of Jews during the Crusades, the burning and forced conversion of Jews in Spain (called *Marranos*, which means swine), and I have studied in great detail the torture and murders of more than a million Jewish children by the Nazis. But I have also seen—across history—many stories of loyalty, of transcendent courage and generosity on behalf of Jews, so that the historical pattern of accepting and trusting Jews, and then rejecting them (especially in Spain, Germany, Poland, and Italy) has left me deeply ambivalent about the future of my grandchildren in this fickle species of ours.

It is exactly such a pattern of acceptance and rejection that Stille shows forth in his stories about five Italian-Jewish families who lived in Italy under Mussolini's version of fascism. He points out that the Jewish community of Rome was the oldest in the Western world, that two hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ there were tens of thousands of Jews in Rome, and that at Julius Caesar's death Jews kept watch and wept over Caesar's tomb out of gratitude for his tolerance. And he points out that despite the ghettos, and despite the papal bull *Cumnimis absurdum* of 1555, which proclaimed the absurdity of having the enemy-Jew living in close association with Christians, and which made the ghettos more like prisons than neighborhoods, the Jewish people—who constituted less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the Italian population—have been living with other Italians in peace for two thousand years.

Until 1938 and 1939. In those years Mussolini's government published the racial laws that caused Jews to be fired from all governmental and military jobs, and banned them from all of the skilled professions. Before 1938 Mussolini had described Germany as a "country of murderers and pederasts," and National Socialism as "savage barbarism." But as his relationship with Hitler became closer, that closeness was reflected not only in the racist laws of Italy, and not only in the growing hatred directed against Jews in the streets and businesses of Italy, but also in the increasingly desperate feelings of Jews themselves. These feelings are the main topic of Stille's book.

For Stille, the axis of history runs straight through the intimate feelings of human beings the way a string runs through beads. The string—the political and military events that occurred between Mussolini's March on Rome in 1922 and the surrender of the German forces in Italy in 1945—only line up and display the joys and the terrors, the twistings and the turnings in the minds of the people in his stories.

One day in 1936, after many of the Jews of Italy had shown their loyalty to Mussolini's fascism by praising him to the skies and by melting down some of their most precious gold and silver religious objects "for the Fatherland," Benito Mussolini formally declared the existence of an Italian Empire. A young Jewess was listening to his declaration with love and pride; she found herself weeping with joy at the eloquence of *Il Duce*. At that moment she felt at one with Italy, bound to her country just as her ancestors had felt bound to it for many generations. At the very height of her passion, she heard a voice near her call out, "Damn the Jews!"

Each one of the five Italian Jewish families Stille examines experienced the love and the horror that this young woman felt, but each of them experienced it in a different way. The Ovazzas of Turin experienced it much as she did, in the very midst of their own patriotic fervor; the Foas, also of Turin, experienced it as anti-Fascists; the Di Verolis of Rome experienced it, for the most part, as inhabitants of the Roman ghetto, and as people more or less indifferent to the world of politics and war; and the Schonheits of Ferrara experienced it in the Buchenwald concentration camp. But all of the Jews in these stories felt the ever-tightening grip of the Fatherland on their lives. All of them loved their country and found themselves more and more hated and hurt by the object of their love, their homeland. As their country moved closer and closer to Hitler's kind of fascism they found themselves more and more violently whipsawed by love for their country and fear for their lives.

Some were massacred in Italy; others were deported to the killing camps of Central Europe and died there; still others survived. All of them experienced the same sort of ambiguous relationship with their country that Jews have been experiencing

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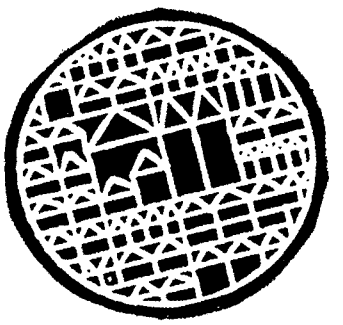

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Book discussed in this essay

Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families under Fascism, *by Alexander Stille, Summit Books, $25, 365 pp.*

in many forms since A.D. 70, when Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus conquered Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple there, brought the sacred Menorah from the Temple back to Rome, and was rewarded with the title of Caesar. The history of the Jewish Diaspora has given a particular sort of meaning to Shakespeare's words in *All's Well*: "The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together."

But the story of the Jews in Fascist Italy is not only a story of people whipsawed between love and terror; it is also the story of moments when human solidarity happened, when Bonhoeffer's "villains and saints" stepped forward.

One of those times was September 1943, when Rome was declared an Open City, and the Germans took control of it. On September 27, SS Major Kappler demanded fifty kilograms—more than a hundred pounds—of gold from the Jewish community of Rome. He gave the Jews thirty-six hours to assemble the gold, and he said that if the gold was not in his hands by the end of this time two hundred Roman Jews would be taken hostage and sent to Germany or the Russian front. By this time the Jews knew what this threat meant—torture and death.

By the first morning after Kappler's ultimatum only about five kilograms of gold were ready. Two Jewish leaders rushed to the Vatican and asked for the rest of the gold they needed. Officials in the Vatican immediately agreed to lend it to them. When the leaders came back to their synagogue that afternoon they found a crowd of people carrying gold in dozens of forms. They were Christians and Jews from all parts of Rome—mostly people of modest means in these poverty-stricken times. Many of the wealthy Romans who gave gold did not give their names, and accepted no receipts, and one poor woman who used to sell candy in the streets took off her gold earrings, and said, "Take these." She pointed out that the stones were fake, but that there was a gram or two of pure gold in the earrings, and she wept. The Jewish leaders, with all of this support from the people, decided not to accept the Vatican loan, since well before the deadline they had collected more than fifty kilograms of gold, and 2 million lire in cash. The Germans took the gold and the cash, and no hostages.

And there were heroes in Genoa—like Rabbi Riccardo Pacifici, the chief rabbi of Genoa, and Don Francesco Repetto, a gentle, powerful priest. The two of them separately and in warmhearted cooperation reached into all corners of the Genoa area to feed and to protect Jews after the Germans occcupied Italy on September 8, 1943. Their main regrets were voiced by the then Monsignor Repetto on his death-bed in Genoa in the summer of 1984: "If we only could have saved more!"

That statement conveys the bitter beauty of the human condition. Creatures in our species can be as cruel as we can be kind. We have explored the upper and lower limits of spiritual possibility. Because we are often curious about the stories of those explorations we are capable of learning how intimately our lives are intertwined with each other.

In *Don Juan* Byron wrote:

Hatred is the longest pleasure.
We love in haste, but we detest at leisure.

Like many aphorisms this one could be reversed and make as much sense:

Loving is the longest pleasure.
We hate in haste, but we love at leisure.

Both hatred and love can endure. The stories in Stille's scrupulous and lucid book bear this out, and teach us that there is some reason for realistic hope. □

STAGE

FINAL ACTS

'WALTZ,' 'HOME,' & 'CLOSER'

Paula Vogel's *The Baltimore Waltz*, which played at the Circle Repertory earlier this year, must be the funniest AIDS play ever written—which does not mean that it is not an extremely moving one. Tucked into the program and printed with the play in *American Theatre* (September 1991) is a letter from Vogel's brother, who died of AIDS in 1988, and the play ("To the memory of Carl—because I cannot sew") is a fantasy European trip which a brother (Carl) and a sister (Anna) share—a substitute for the trip that the playwright did not take with her brother in 1986. Given these circumstances, one might expect a maudlin mixture of sentimentality and guilt, but Vogel shares her brother's oblique humor, and the tears, when they come (and they did come in the theater the night I was there), force their way through the broad comedy.

Even though Vogel is not one for conventional exposition, she manages to establish Carl's disease in the first scene, to provide the unrealistic but very real base (the hospital in Baltimore) from which the imaginary journey emerges. That journey—Anna's response to her brother's illness—begins with a preposterous transference in which she becomes the one suffering from the fatal disease—ATD (Acquired Toilet Disease), "an affliction, so far, of single schoolteachers" who get it from the toilet seats in their schools. Anna's trip becomes one sexual adventure after another (in the time of your life, live, as Saroyan said in a much more innocent play), and Carl's becomes a mixture of art appreciation and international intrigue. There is one other character, the Third Man (one scene is a parody of the ferris wheel sequence from the Carol Reed movie), who is the doctor and everyone they meet in Europe. Vogel has a taste for odd images—sometimes gross ones. Carl and the other man in a trench coat flash teddy bears at one another, the secret signal of spies and homosexuals (perhaps undercover agents in either case). The Dutch boy who saved Holland by putting his finger

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in the dike has become a fifty-year-old in wooden shoes and a Buster Brown haircut who services female tourists. Dr. Todesrocheln, who is rumored to have a cure, does a Dr. Strangelove bit in which one hand fights the other for the flask of Anna's urine which he wants to drink. The AIDS analogies keep surfacing in the most unlikely places, preparing for the final return to the hospital and Carl's death. Even at this point, reality does not hold; Carl is revealed in the uniform of a nineteenth-century Austrian officer and he and Anna dance offstage to a Strauss waltz. A lovely finish, but one that does not let the audience forget that this is *The Baltimore Waltz*.

The play is available in print and will certainly have other performances, but the one at the Circle Rep was remarkable. Loy Arcenas's minimally furnished set, with a couch that could be converted to whatever the scene required; Anne Bogart's uncluttered direction which stuck close to Vogel's text; a workable performance by Joe Mantello as the Third Man and a very attractive one by Richard Thompson as Carl—all these could have come together to make effective theater of Vogel's play. But there was more to it than that. Cherry Jones, as Anna, gave one of the most incredible performances I have seen in recent years. Within a single scene, often within a single speech, she could slide from rough comedy to sharp-edged pathos with such apparent ease that the audience hardly knew what was happening until the laugh in the throat turned into a catch. Vogel's play is a good one but looking at it on the page or recollecting it in tranquillity, one begins to see the things that do not quite work—or ought not to. Cherry Jones's presence on stage kept the blemishes at bay.

If *The Baltimore Waltz* is about trying not to know what one knows, Cheryl L. West's *Before It Hits Home* at the Public Theater is a much more direct attack on "our historical problems with denial," as West said in the *Village Voice* (February 19, 1992). The "our" in the quotation is the black community and the denial is the insistence, despite growing statistics, that AIDS is a gay white disease that has nothing to do with blacks. West's protagonist is Wendal, a bisexual jazz musician who finally accepts that he has AIDS, and goes home presumably because he shares the belief of Robert Frost's hired man that "Home is the place where, when you have to go there,/They have to take you in." A cold coming he had of it, as another poet almost said. His mother, who has always made-over him, sees her house poisoned, as much by his homosexuality as by his sickness, and simply moves out. His brother, although sympathetic, turns away, as though Wendal may somehow infect his planned marriage. His aunt keeps her distance and his son will not come near him. Only his father, with whom he has had a running fight over the life he leads, stays with him, nurses him, mourns his death. One of the best scenes is one in which Wendal plays in two spaces at once, telling his male lover and proving unable to tell his female lover that he has AIDS. For the most part, the rest of the play consists of realistic scenes—sometimes short ones as in a television play—and the play comes across as a conventional family crisis drama which makes and then underlines its points. Its power is inherent in its subject matter.

One of the most unusual and most effective AIDS pieces I have seen is Dan Froot's *Closer*, which he performed recently at Philadelphia's Movement Theatre International as part of one of the P.S. 122 Field Trips. Froot is a performance artist who plays a saxophone (I guess from the sound and the look of the keys that it is a saxophone although it is long and uncurved like a clarinet), and who lets go of the mouthpiece to grunt and bark and make strange sounds. I did not understand this device when he introduced it in the first number of the show, but I do know that, as he uses it in *Closer*, it adds urgency to a short piece that mixes music, nonverbal sound, and words. He stands at the back of the stage and, after speeches that make clear that his friend is dying of AIDS, he alternates playing his horn, barking, and calling out numbers that descend as he moves forward. When he reaches the front of the stage, he gets to zero, and then pointing to himself—"one"—he begins to count the members of the audience. This movement from the falling T-cell count to the growing number of possible victims is devastating. *Closer* is closer than most performance arts pieces ever get.

GERALD WEALES

SCREEN

DYING OF HEAT

VERHOEVEN'S 'BASIC INSTINCT'

"Dying," like "spending," was for the Elizabethans a metaphor meaning orgasm. The young lover of Thomas Kyd's play, *The Spanish Tragedy*, enjoys a tryst with his inamorata in which the word provides the keynote of the scene. The gallant promises to "die" in the arms of his beauty. A moment later, he certainly does die, quite literally and violently, in full view of the audience when his rivals seize, stab, and hang him.

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The big thrill promised to the audiences of *Basic Instinct* is that they get to see Michael Douglas first "die" and then *die* between the thighs of Sharon Stone.

Douglas plays a police officer in charge of the investigation of a rock singer's violent death. A lot of superficial evidence points to the dead man's sex partner, a gorgeous and wealthy trash-novelist, played by Stone. We have witnessed the murder at the film's start. Though the staging concealed the killer's face, we saw her dispatch an ice pick right after bringing him to climax. Now we find out that the novelist depicted just such a murder as the pivotal scene of her latest book. She informs Douglas that she is now working on a new fiction about a detective who falls in love with a murderess and is finally killed by her. Douglas, who is called a "shooter" by his fellow cops because of his trigger-happy ways, takes up the gauntlet. His pursuit of Stone is both investigatory and amorous. Several times the couple go to bed and each time the audience gets to squeal in prurient anticipation as Stone's right hand moves toward some object near or under her bed.

Since we have not actually seen the murderess's face, and since the mounting evidence gradually implicates two women other than Stone, Joe Eszterhas's screenplay does have a conventional whodunnit aspect. And, when Douglas finally falls for Stone emotionally as well as sexually and therefore starts wishing to see her vindicated, the movie takes on the dramatic shape of three other Eszterhas scripts: *Jagged Edge* (Glenn Close *just knows* that Jeff Bridges can't be a psycho-killer and yet, and yet...), *Betrayed* (Debra Winger *just knows* that Tom Berenger can't be a racist hitman and yet, and yet...), and *The Music Box* (Jessica Lange *just knows* her father can't be a concentration camp sadist and yet, and yet...). But there are several crucial differences between *Basic Instinct* and the previous movies. Their protagonists were women who, from the start, had emotional investments in the men they were investigating and/or defending. Though Douglas's obsession with Stone deepens, it is first and last a matter of Eros stimulated by Thanatos: he longs to "die" making love to her precisely because he may also *die* doing so. This entails another difference from the earlier scripts: their heroines longed to establish the innocence of their loved ones but feared to uncover guilt. The opposite is true of Douglas. He's superficially decent enough to want to clear Stone but really wants to find her guilty so that the erotic charge that her putative murderousness gives him will continue.

Most important contrast: Close, Winger, and Lange all remained staunch defenders of morality no matter what they found out about their men. But the major discovery Douglas makes is of his own murderous nature: he needs a killer as his sex partner because he himself has a killer instinct. But can Stone really be that partner? Is she really a killer at all?

Given this sensationalistic material with its gutter-profane dialogue, necessarily monochromatic characterization, and ridiculously high body count, it's bewildering to read (in the March 15 *New York Times*) that "Mr. Eszterhas engaged in public spats with the director, Paul Verhoeven, over what Mr. Eszterhas regarded as the director's insensitive interpretation of the script." *Insensitive*! Was the initial draft of the script Chekhovian? I'll never know but it does seem as if Verhoeven has given the material everything it requires: peek-a-boo sex; brutal action; racy delivery of racy dialogue; hints of perversity beyond the rather commonplace perversities we actually see; slam-bang car chases; lucid unraveling of the detective story aspects; fetishistic treatment of expensive things, places, and people; photography by Jan De Bont that uses the lights and shadows of California for both baleful and erotic effects; and, most important of all, sheer heat.

That sense of heat isn't generated only by nudity and mimed sex. For instance, at one point Douglas visits his psychological counselor (Douglas is being treated after his accidental killing of an innocent bystander), who is also his ex-lover. He initiates intercourse. Far in the background, through the apartment's window, we see an aerobics class in session in a room of the opposite apartment house. A less artful director would have cut back and forth between the lovers' coupling and the dancers gyrating for the sake of cheap amplification, but Verhoeven leaves the aerobics in long shot so that the distant line of leotarded bodies contributes only an erotic vibration that nicely heightens the lovemaking in the foreground. And, in a disco scene in which Stone's lesbian lover, while dancing with someone else, jealously watches Stone and Douglas cavort, the furious woman's slashing, sideways dance-moves perfectly express her anger and potential violence.

All of the acting is at least adequate, but Michael Douglas's is only just that. Like Al Pacino, he has intensity but is often unable to bring that intensity to a boil. Douglas's explosions (and many are required by the script) lack real fury. He merely screams at the end of a sentence and pounds the nearest table. (If you want to see what I mean by believable fury, just rent *A Shock to the System* and watch Michael Caine explode at Peter Riegert.)

Sharon Stone gleams as the main suspect. With the aid of Verhoeven and De Bont, she uses her ice-goddess beauty as a weapon. In the role of a foul-mouthed, good-slob sidekick, George Dzundza moves so comfortably that he might as well take out a patent on the part if John Goodman's has expired. As Douglas's shrink-lover, Jeanne Tripplehorn works alchemy: she turns a plot component into a human being.

The accusation by some gay groups that this movie contributes to homophobia is a canard. Sharon Stone's character is bisexual, but her lesbianism isn't an expression of her suspected murderousness but of her power, i.e., the license that wealth, brains, and looks bestow. The feeling that this woman can and may do *anything* is a major titillation of the film and it's conveyed by her dare-devil driving, plush house, and brazen defiance of the police as well as by the sight of her nuzzling other women. At one point, when George Dzundza got into his car, the fellow seated next to me predicted to a pal that it would blow up because Stone had wired it. When no such explosion occurred, the pal chaffed the predictor, who replied, "Man, I thought she would of done it. When you're that rich, you'll do anything!" That guy understood what powers this movie better than the protesters do. RICHARD ALLEVA

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'DUAL LOYALTIES IN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY'

AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

Heart of the matter

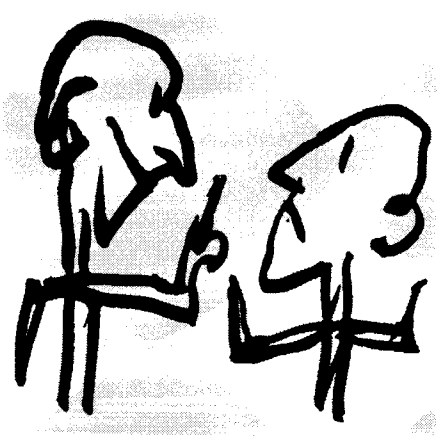
William Shea's essay, "Dual Loyalties in Catholic Theology" [January 31] evoked in this reader somewhat ambivalent feelings. Indeed, it has already elicited from your readers rather varied reactions [Correspondence, February 28]; to most of which I subscribe.

On the one hand, there is much to appreciate in the piece. It is written with Shea's usual autobiographical verve and obvious, even somewhat anguished, concern. I certainly lament with him the factionalism that has polarized the community of Catholic theologians; like him, I endorse the urgent need for renewed conversation at all levels of the church; I too shed no tears for the "separated theology" (de Lubac) of the pre-Vatican II era. In this I stand with all card-carrying Commonweal Catholics.

But I also detect intimations of a subtext in Shea's article that I find problematic. And since the subtext I perceive is more and more becoming the text of much of theology done in the college or university setting, my own concerns lead me to seek further clarity regarding issues and options. Thus Shea rightly observes that "we are witnessing a breakdown of ecclesial life" and he is clearly dismayed by the prospect. But then begins the subtext which finally wonders whether the "*Geist*" animating the loyalty to other texts might not, after all, be genuinely alien "to the Catholic tradition as a whole," and he goes on to dismiss as "disingenuous [the] claims of some liberals that they are recouping earlier Catholic sources of liberalism." This assertion strikes me as both vague and troubling; for it seems to suggest that there is no precedent in the tradition for the present situation, that we are embarked upon an entirely new enterprise whose issue may finally be not the enlargement of the tradition but its supersession in a sort of Joachamite "third age." If such be the trajectory intimated, the present scission in the theological community could well become a schism.

Adding to my uneasiness as to what Shea ultimately intends is the quick rhetorical move whereby the questions he had forthrightly formulated regarding the tenability of his own position—questions about a secularist reduction of the tradition, about an excessive and possibly unfaithful accommodation to contemporary culture, about the risk of losing touch with the realities of the gospel—are now declared inapplicable since "the very charges themselves reveal to me that I no longer share the view of theology that undergirds them."

Now it is one thing to suggest that one's theological method has become more catholic by including texts from the "civil" as well as the "ecclesial" tradition. It is, I think, entirely another matter to suggest



that in this expanded theological universe concern for the substance and content of the gospel (which the questions, posed and then dismissed, suggest to me) is somehow transcended. Moreover, to find such questions and the concerns they articulate genuine and germane should not subject one to being cast out into the seeming dark company of "ecclesial theologians whose sole task is the interpretation of Catholic texts." For among the loyalties of the Christian is there not a paramount, indeed identity-defining loyalty: to Christ and his gospel, as proclaimed by and in the church? Hence, though one might legitimately chide certain theologians for being too narrowly "ecclesiastical," can one be a Catholic theologian without being profoundly "ecclesial"? Here Thomas and Bonaventure are at one, whatever the methodological differences between them; both would have found the notion of a "nonecclesial theologian" passing strange, if not utter nonsense. Both too would have stressed that the act of faith, which seeks understanding, passes beyond the mediating texts (however amply construed) to the reality of the One whom faith desires and loves; that theology properly culminates in prayer and worship; quite literally in ortho-doxy; and that the locus of this worshipful encounter is *in medio ecclesiae*, in the midst of the church.

Hence the many "spirits," enumerated by Shea, that are most certainly abroad, need to be seriously and unremittingly tested, though always honoring von Hügel's injunction of "ample patience and delicate discrimination." How do we discern whether the tunes we are humming to our high-pitched guitars are the Lord's songs in an alien land or alien songs in the house of the Lord? Such discernment should not simply be remanded to the magisterium, but should profoundly engage the entire Catholic theological community. I, for one, believe that the ultimate test must be a Christological one. So it has been from the beginning: "Beloved, not every spirit is to be trusted; test the spirits to see whether they are of God.... Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God!" [1 John 4:1-2]. But precisely there lies the heart of the matter.

For the "breakdown of ecclesial life" which Shea laments is, I think, symptomatic of a deeper crisis at whose root lies Christological doubt and denial. Quite simply: before the decisive Christological question, "who do you say I am?" some stand mute, while others confess other ultimate loyalties, thereby eroding the one foundation upon which all baptized Christians, whether professional theologians or not, can stand securely. In many and varied guises a Christological "de-cen-

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tering" is abroad in the guild of academic theologians: whether in the name of ecumenical openness, feminist suspicion, or deconstructive ambiguity and pluralism. But the outcome of this massive assault is to evacuate the gospel of its distinctive content: the proclamation and celebration that Jesus Christ is Lord.

As I have indicated, the three questions Shea forthrightly poses, then too hastily withdraws, remain without answer in his article. They are, coincidentally but providentially, pointedly raised, however, in the same issue of *Commonweal*, in Luke Johnson's review of one depressing expression of the current Christological confusions: John Bowden's *Jesus: The Unanswered Questions*. There the questions appear unanswerable in principle and the *Geist* animating the book under discussion seems to have moved, unambiguously if regretfully, beyond the Christian tradition to a post-Christ and post-Christian reconstruction. I share Johnson's puzzlement about "the odd way in which not the tradition but the assumptions of modernity are assumed to be valid and set the agenda for the discussion." And, though his conclusion is incisive and stark, it is definitely worth pondering: the "allegiance to Christianity" appears "largely sentimental, and unfortunately provides further solid evidence why liberalism is not trusted by those who could benefit from it."

I hope these reactions and too abbreviated thoughts may serve to further the conversation William Shea boldly stimulated. They stem from an appreciation of Shea's concerns as well as a real apprehension concerning the drift of his reflections. For over all the many discussions and debates and questions currently agitating the Catholic theological community, there looms the haunting avowal of H. Richard Niebuhr in his classic, *The Kingdom of God in America*. Toward the end of the book, in a section significantly entitled "Liberalism and the Kingdom of God," he pens this famous observation: "In the course of succeeding generations the heritage of faith with which liberalism had started was used up. The liberal children of liberal fathers needed to operate with ever diminishing capital." There, I believe, lies a cautionary tale for Catholics, especially those of us of liberal parentage and persuasion.

REV. ROBERT P. IMBELLI

The writer is director of the Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry at Boston College.

The author replies:

In my essay I tried to communicate two concerns. The first is this: The Left and Right in the Roman Catholic church aren't communicating with each other. This is a big problem for the church. Neither its leaders nor its theologians are doing anything about it.

We theologians quite rightly expect our episcopal leaders to listen to one another and to us and to converse civilly about our differences. We quite rightly criticize them when they do not. But what sort of example do we set them? The Right talks to the Right about the Left and the Left to the Left about the Right. This split to my way of thinking is not brought on by a difference in Christological orthodoxy; it reflects a spiritual and psychological immaturity in the Catholic soul, and it more directly regards ecclesiology. The fissure extends from the papal throne to the parish pew. Each side wishes the other would go away so that it would have the church to itself. I wanted to call this to the attention of theologians, and am glad that Bob Imbelli joins his concern to mine.

My second concern is to raise the question of how the alien texts which become important to theologians are to be taken in this intrachurch conversation. Within that consideration I expressed a worry over my own liberal bent in theology, and I posed three questions from the Right. Bob Imbelli moves from my worry to his warning and even accusations about the orthodoxy of some of our colleagues. I think we have uncovered a hot wire.

He thinks that the liberals are on a slippery slope to Christological disaster on the model of nineteenth-century Protestant liberalism. By his measure (Christological orthodoxy and piety), we Catholic liberals are going doctrinally bankrupt. Second, he thinks we are courting disaster by supposing that theology is a nonecclesial discipline. To the first I say that we liberals are forever on the slippery slope to "unbelief," though I hope not to "unfaith." To the second, I rejoin that theology is no longer a solely ecclesial discipline; indeed, a theology that is solely ecclesiastical can be no more than a "separated theology." The situation is new, the requirements and range of theology are new. We know, of course, that the new includes the old, but it is not the old and never will be.

On the first point, the bits of sociological data that I read indicate that Catholic theologians, while slightly more liberal (this might better read "linguistically sophisticated") than the Catholic laity, are not one whit more Christologically heterodox than the laity.

Many, however, are very likely liberals and so on the slippery slope. We might ask just what are the alternatives to the slippery slope under current conditions. There is the hermetically sealed ecclesiastical theology (the "separated theology" mentioned by de Lubac). There is the Christologically normed ecclesial theology supported by Bob Imbelli, and, I am sure, many others. There is the pit of doctrinal relativism to which the slippery slope leads. And then there is the liberalism of those on the slippery slope who have not yet slipped into the pit, and here I wish to place myself. Perhaps the "Commonweal Catholics" you mention also struggle to maintain their balance here, bereft of a profoundly ecclesial theology.

While I regard myself as Christologically orthodox as the next Catholic, I also regard myself as one who believes and therefore does not know, and whose belief is always poised on the edge of unbelief. (I think this is true of Bob Imbelli and the pope as well, but I am not in a position to argue that except in such general terms as will not convince either of them.)

Observe the problem of the four options, and of the perceptions (or caricatures) that rise from them. To those who take the first and second options, the ecclesiastical and the profoundly ecclesial, liberalism is an early stage of unbelief. If you are on the slope you might as well be in the pit. This is what Pius X saw when he looked at poor Loisy and Tyrrell and then pushed them over the edge. To the liberals, on the other hand, the ecclesial is just a gussied-up and self-deceived case of the first. To liberals, the profoundly ecclesial and Christologically

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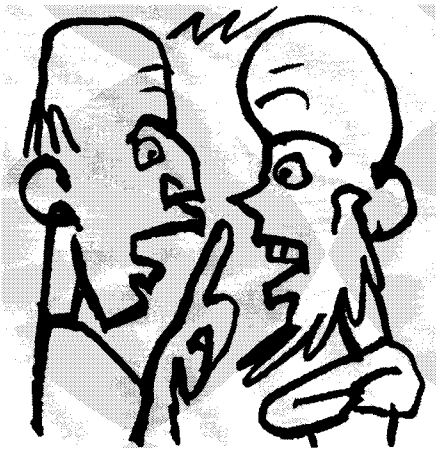
normed theologians are the running dogs of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This is why my top concern is top. We are falling into distortions fueled on animosities and fears. We are in big political trouble as a result.

Of all the theologians who may be with me on the slippery slope, in my opinion and hope there are few who will end up over the edge. To my count there are few Catholic feminists, deconstructionists, ecumenists (his terms, not mine) who are at work "de-centering" our Christological faith. Bob Imbelli must be exaggerating unknowingly when he talks of a massive assault on the gospel resting on "Christological doubt and denial." An assault on orthodoxy, by Catholic theologians!? I cannot refrain from asking: What theological meetings do you attend? Are there some I don't know about? Is there something going on at Boston College? I must add that the faculty of Saint Louis University is part of no massive assault on Christological orthodoxy. Where then?

While raising his own issue, which is Christological orthodoxy, Bob Imbelli ignores my issue, which is church practice. I think that is possible to be a Catholic theologian and yet to hold certain convictions "with religious intensity" that do not rise from Catholic sources and do not (yet?) have ecclesial sanction. I then raised three questions which suggest that anyone so engaged may be self-deceived, or worse. They are real questions, and I treated them seriously. But Imbelli wants my *answers*. Had I answers, I would have given them. I didn't duck them. I do not expect to have answers to them until I die, and then my life, not my theory, is the answer to the questions. They are the sort of questions which strike a chord, which may help one better attend to what one does, but which receive a finally personal rather than theological answer. It may be that even profoundly ecclesial theologians should devise similar questions for themselves, out of their own perspectives.

For myself, I do not have a guarantee that all will turn out as Bob Imbelli and I wish. I can only say that in my fifty-six years I have found no norm in a doctrine, no seizure of final certainty that allowed me to judge that what I believe and what the church believes is beyond doubt



true—yet I believe. If there is a difference here, between liberal theologians and profoundly ecclesial theologians, it may be a matter of grace, of call, if we need to speak of it in religious terms.

To illustrate my issue I offered the five little beliefs that I regard as drawn from an "alien text" (the "American experience," theoretically explicated in American philosophers). These beliefs (regarding the ecclesial relevance of democratic experience, freedom of inquiry and communication, loyalty to the entire human community, the value of pluralism, and the nature of reflection) are not Roman Catholic, though some Roman Catholics subscribe to them; they have been steadily repudiated by our infallible magisterium for two centuries; they are now suffered by our leaders to exist in nonecclesiastical reality and are denied again whenever they appear inside the gate.

Bob Imbelli does not speak to the question of whether these beliefs are in fact drawn from an alien text, or, rather, from the Great Tradition. Neither does Imbelli tell me whether, in his view, I may believe these things *as a revelation of God's meaning for human beings* and at the same time regard myself as a Catholic theologian. If he accepts that as a possibility, he will have agreed with me on the dual texts, the dual sources of Catholic theology. Far more theologians, far more Catholics, believe them and in them than harbor Christological heterodoxy. They, and not Christological heresy, will create a new age for the church, if there is one coming.

Donald Kraus [*Commonweal*, February 28] raised an important point. Alien texts may be and have been baptized. He cites excellent examples. I have heard from others making the same point: Catholicism has been an appropriating religion, proving that nothing human is alien. Never either/or, always both/and. Well, yes and no.

Let me distinguish. Appropriation is one thing, and recognition and acceptance are another. Mistletoe and fir trees are one thing; freedom of inquiry and communication and the AAUP statement on academic freedom are another. Joining the witches' coven is also another thing, and so are: practicing Hindu rites, placing one's spiritual life in the hands of a Zen master, weekending with an EST group, sitting on the hilltop with the shaman, deciding that Jews don't have to be Catholics, that it is perhaps not even desirable that they become such, and that there may be something to the observance of the dual Torah after all. I am not being flippant. I cannot afford to be. His Eminence has warned us quite directly about these things and exiled a perfectly decent and responsible theologian over one of them. Why? Because they are new? No. Because he believes they are not of God, they are not a proper part of a profoundly ecclesial theology and experience. They are drawn from alien texts. Well, is he correct? Are they of God or not?

Bob Imbelli finds "the heart of the matter" in Christological orthodoxy. And I have a guiding question: What does it mean theologically and religiously when theologians start to take the stranger seriously as a stranger, stop trying to convert her or appropriate her meaning, and start to learn from her? What when, rather than looting the Egyptians for the sake of the house of Israel, we begin to see God's grace for us in Egypt? I hope that this is not the fleshpots again. There may be another meaning than the slippery slope, perhaps some healthy transformation of the tradition. It may be that one should check one's *kerygma* at the door and replace it with *sophia*. That, at least, is my intention. The outcome? Time, as Bob Imbelli suggests, will tell, but time spent in the strong currents between traditions. What will not help is Christological high dudgeon.

WILLIAM M. SHEA

The writer is chairman of the Department of Theological Studies at Saint Louis University.

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A marginal Mediterranean Jewish peasant

LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON

Jesus has always refused to remain simply a historical figure. This represented a satisfactory state of affairs for Christians who considered his continuing presence among them through the Holy Spirit much better both for Jesus and for them than his short and painful visitation in the flesh. Such at least was the presupposition for the centuries preceding the "Quest of the Historical Jesus" recounted by Albert Schweitzer's book of that title (1906).

The religious impulses of the Reformation had something to do with desiring a Jesus defined solely by the gospel rather than dogma. The Enlightenment's ideal of a history shed of supernatural explanations had even more to do with it. Now not just a dogmatically purged Jesus but one freed even of the encumbrances of faith was sought behind the pages of narratives irrevocably suffused with faith perceptions. The naive Christian assumption that Jesus was in fact just what the Creed declared gave way to the critical historical premise that Jesus could turn out to be just about anything except what the Creed declared.

Schweitzer's survey of the successive reconstructions of Jesus showed that a resolution to be "critically historical" did not prevent each generation of searchers from finding a reflection of their own ideals in the mirror of Jesus. Schweitzer thought that he had ended the quest by discovering once for all a Jesus who was truly different from his own age, a Jesus defined utterly by ancient eschatological dreams. The alternative to his reconstruction, he insisted, was absolute skepticism.

But scholars did not share Schweitzer's confidence in Mark's Gospel as a neutral and reliable source for the facts about Jesus. They regarded Mark also as a theologically motivated writing. After Schweitzer, a mood of historical skepticism reached across the period of both World Wars—when "biblical theology" appeared a far more pertinent subject for a world in crisis—ending only with the start of a "New Search for the Historical Jesus" in the 1960s that continues to the present day.

The new search had reasons to hope for a better outcome. Literary analysis of the Gospels enables a more sophisticated sifting of the evidence. No longer is one Gospel selected as the exclusive source; rather, materials from all the Gospels are sorted into levels of tradition and tested for possible derivation from Jesus. Not only the Nag-Hammadi writings but also many other apocryphal gospels previously known but inadequately studied now enter the discussion. Recent archeological discoveries instruct us more accurately about the first-century world, and the tools of social analysis aid us in extrapolating from fragmentary evidence. First-century Judaism is better known to us than ever, not only because of the discoveries at Qumran and other sites, but also because older sources like the historian Josephus, the intertestamental Jewish literature (especially apocalyptic), the Mishnah and Talmud, are subjected to far more critical scrutiny. Most of all, the new quest is carried out in an academic environment far removed from the religious polemics that characterized earlier attempts, and is able at last to deal with Jesus in truly "historical" terms.

It has been an embarrassment, therefore, that the many books generated by the new quest are no less divergent in their portrayal of Jesus. Both Meier and Crossan wryly note the bewildering array of portraits: "From Jesus the violent revolutionary to Jesus the gay magician, from Jesus the apocalyptic fanatic to Jesus the wisdom teacher or cynic philosopher unconcerned about eschatology," writes Meier (compare Crossan, pp. xxvii-xxviii). Both authors are motivated by the desire to correct the slipshod methods enabling such apparently irreconcilable readings from the same evidence.

These two studies represent a conscious coming of age in the second quest for the historical Jesus. Both authors are methodologically aware, and make clear to their readers from the beginning their presuppositions and procedures. Each work, furthermore, is the fruit of long labor. Meier began his work on the question in 1984 with an article for the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, and developed his analysis through a series of studies. Crossan's volume is truly a *magnum opus*, bringing to a climax the work he began as early as 1973 (with *In Parables*), and intensified in his *Four Other Gospels: Shadows on the Contours of the Canon* (1985), and *The Cross that Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative* (1988). Both books are also responsive to the vast literature on every aspect of Jesus research that has preceded them.

Yet for all their surface similarities, a close comparison between the works is difficult. First, each author's approach to

Books discussed in this essay

A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume One: The Roots of the Problem and the Person, *John P. Meier, Doubleday, $25, 484 pp.*

The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant, *John Dominic Crossan, HarperSan Francisco, $30, 507 pp.*

LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON *is professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at Indiana University. His* Faith's Freedom: A Classic Spirituality for Contemporary Christians *is published by Fortress Press.*

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scholarship is distinctive. Meier deliberately sets himself the task of providing a consensus view. He opens with the fantasy of a Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, and agnostic scholar being locked in the Harvard Divinity School library until they come to a compromise agreement on the historical Jesus. His approach is invariably irenic, discriminating, and fair. While the body of his text tries to work out a definite position on disputed points, his end-notes provide a running commentary on the complex debates that form the context for his decisions. In contrast, Crossan deliberately cites only those authors that agree with him, candidly acknowledging that the reading of the evidence is his own. All he asks of those who disagree with him is an engagement with the material as intense, and a use of method as scrupulous as his. Second, the two works are not at equal stages of completion. Crossan's is a finished piece, with the strengths and vulnerabilities that go with that accomplishment. But Meier's is the first of two volumes, with the second—containing the critical discussions of Jesus' ministry and death—yet to appear.

Meier devotes the first part of his book to the "Roots of the Problem." He begins with a helpful distinction between the "Real Jesus" and the "Historical Jesus," in order to remind readers that the latter can never be more than a partial reconstruction based on the available evidence. He then surveys all the available sources concerning Jesus, Jewish and Greco-Roman as well as Christian. In contrast to Crossan, he is determinedly skeptical concerning the value of the apocryphal writings; apart from some confirming evidence on one point or another, the historian is still ultimately dependent on the canonical Gospels. Meier concludes with a sensible discussion of the various criteria used by scholars for determining materials that go back to Jesus. Part 2, "Roots of the Person," reconstructs what we can determine concerning Jesus' origins, family, language, and social status. In this section Meier uses cross-cultural insights selectively but effectively. The first volume concludes with a detailed discussion of the chronology of Jesus' life.

From this beginning, some hints of Meier's overall understanding of the historical Jesus can be gleaned. His understanding of the key term "marginal," for example, is complex: Jesus is marginal because he is not, within the greater Mediterranean world, a recognizably "important" figure; because he ended his life as an executed criminal; because he came from a socioeconomic level that was "marginal"; because his teachings were not entirely within the mainstream even of a widely diverse Judaism; because he acted in a way that generated reaction and repression from established authorities within Judaism. How Meier will fill out this sketch, of course, remains to be seen. It is worth noting, however, that this portrayal is not wildly at odds with that developed at greater length by Crossan, even though Meier's choice of sources is.

Meier makes a number of fascinating observations, including possible inferences to be drawn from the naming of children in Jesus' family—they suggest a conscious allegiance to the ancestral traditions—and from the potential challenge to the established priestly powers presented by a wonder-working celibate layman. The only thing that is distinctively "Catholic" in Meier's early discussions is his extended treatment of the questions concerning the virgin birth and the brothers of Jesus. Otherwise, his book seems to be accomplishing its goal of providing the ecumenical and educated reader with a safe and reliable guide through the maze of questions concerning the historical Jesus.

If Meier tries to provide a consensus view, Crossan's reading of the evidence is unabashedly personal. One of the most literate of contemporary New Testament scholars, Crossan is always a delight to read, and always finds ways to surprise the reader. Here he opens with a complete selection of "the Gospel according to Jesus," a gathering of the sayings which Crossan considers Jesus' own. This collection he calls a "score to be played and a program to be enacted." Like his succinct discussion of his social-scientific and textual-stratification strategies, his opening ploy suggests Crossan's overall approach to his subject. Crossan takes it as self-evident that gospel criticism has denied us the possibility of tracing Jesus' actions in sequence, but does

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enable us to winnow out Jesus' characteristic deeds and sayings. By placing such deeds and words in the social-historical world reconstructed with the help of ancient extra-Christian sources and cross-cultural comparisons, we can begin to approximate and appreciate the character of Jesus' brief active mission.

For all of Crossan's genuinely impressive learning and brilliance, his work is most obviously vulnerable because of an approach to gospel criticism that moves in the opposite direction from Meier's. For Crossan (and the colleagues he faithfully acknowledges), the apocryphal Gospels are as important, perhaps even more important, for reconstructing the historical Jesus as are the canonical Gospels. At first, the inclusion of such material suggests methodological rigor: every strand of tradition must prove itself. But closer examination suggests the game is rigged. Crossan's remarkably early dating for apocryphal materials and his correspondingly late dating for many canonical materials, together with his frequent assertion that the extracanonical sources are unaffected by the "intracanonical tradition" (and therefore have independent evidenciary worth) rest on little more than a series of judgments made by scholars already committed to that position. By placing all the individual pericopes in competition, furthermore, Crossan is freed to establish his own lines of dependence and development. Such judgments are made so frequently and with so few evident controls that the reader's head sometimes spins from the rapid circularity of argument.

Crossan's book unfolds according to the parts of its subtitle: "The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant." In part 1, cross-cultural studies are used to locate the distinctive character of the first-century Mediterranean world, an empire with a stratified system of patronage operating within a symbolic framework of honor and shame. Crossan demonstrates the quality of life within the strata of that world by

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Correction: We regret that in the March 13 issue we failed to publish the full text of John Fandel's poem, "Pentecost." The complete text follows:

John Fandel

Pentecost

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of
the
Holy
Ghost
,
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focusing on the experiences of various individuals, from the nobility to the lowly peasants in an Egyptian village. In part 2 ("Embattled Brokerage"), Crossan follows the same approach in trying to fill out what it would mean to be a "Jewish peasant" in first-century Palestine. By means of a critical reading of Josephus similar to that carried out in recent years by R. Horsley and others, Crossan distinguishes various levels of response to oppressive Roman occupation, from Josephus's own cooperation with the victors, through the sporadic passive peasant strikes and rural banditry, to the militant resistance of the *sicarii*. Once more, he fills in this social-historical framework with sharply drawn portaits of individual careers partially recoverable from fragmentary evidence. Fully half of Crossan's book, therefore, is taken up by this "thick description" of a Mediterranean Jewish peasant's world. If at times Crossan allows himself the slightly reductive perceptions that social-scientific analysis together with politically correct attitudes encourages, he has nevertheless impressively and efficiently evoked the many dimensions of that complex world.

Crossan develops his portrait of Jesus in part 3, "The Brokerless Kingdom." He considers first the relationship between John and Jesus, concluding that Jesus began as a follower of John and shared his apocalyptic outlook, but then began a separate ministry less apocalyptic and more sapiential in character. Next, Crossan develops more fully the connection between "Kingdom and Wisdom" in his most sustained analysis of Jesus' sayings and parables, which—when critically sifted—point to an understanding of the Kingdom as made up of such "nobodies" of Jesus' world as children, the outcast, and the poor. Crossan understands Jesus to be enunciating a vision of countercultural egalitarianism that most resembles the style and message of the Cynic philosophers. Indeed, his Epilogue terms Jesus a "Peasant Jewish Cynic."

Crossan himself calls the chapter titled "Magic and Meal," "possibly the key chapter in the book." In it, he shows how Jesus' ministry of healing and exorcism (about which Crossan is refreshingly unembarrassed) fits the vision sketched by his words, and that his sending out of delegates to announce the Kingdom and extend the practice of open table-fellowship amounts to a program of peasant free-lance thaumaturgy and solidarity that would inevitably be provocative to an elite structured in terms of temple prerogative and the privileges of exclusiveness. Crossan's judgment on his own work is correct: this chapter is in many ways the most exciting, and shows how the combination of close textual analysis and cultural comparisons can yield an unexpectedly detailed picture.

In contrast, Crossan's last chapters, dealing with Jesus' "Death and Burial" and "Resurrection and Authority," are disappointing. This may be due in part to Crossan's reluctance to draw the Jewish leadership into a significant role in Jesus' demise. The provocative character of Jesus' ministry and his prophetic gesture in the Temple are therefore left inconclusive. Likewise his discussion of Resurrection appearances is dominated by their supposed function in determining authority within Christianity. But these chapters are more fundamentally flawed by Crossan's distinctive theories concerning sources. The effort expended on demonstrating the dependence of all the passion accounts on an early edition of *The Gospel of Peter*, and of the Markan empty-tomb story on the putative *Secret Gospel of Mark* not only discourages a reader already suspicious of Crossan's textual prestidigitation, but also prevents him from developing a fuller and better balanced picture of these critical moments. As it is, the reader finds it equally mysterious why this peasant cynic was executed, and why his movement not only continued but even flourished after his death.

Although both authors are clearer than their predecessors concerning the methodological sophistication required for reconstructing the historical Jesus, they remain surprisingly ambiguous about the purpose of the task or the benefits derived from it. In answer to his own question, "Why bother?" Meier asserts unequivocally that the "Jesus of history is not and cannot be the object of Christian faith," but then insists that for an age willy-nilly defined by historical consciousness, such a quest is an inevitable challenge to Christian *theology* (my italics) and that it serves a number of important if essentially negative functions for preventing theology's flying off to mythic realms: "the historical Jesus remains a constant stimulus to theological renewal." Crossan, in turn, asserts a similar healthy dialectic between "a historically read Jesus and a theologically read Christ," but then concludes his entire book with this flat statement, "If you cannot believe in something produced by reconstruction, you may have nothing left to believe in."

Perhaps after all these authors have not escaped the tendencies so acutely described by Schweitzer. Does not Crossan's picture of a peasant cynic preaching inclusiveness and equality fit perfectly the idealized ethos of the late twentieth-century academic? Is not both authors' hope for a historical foil to theology or faith still fundamentally a *theological* rather than a historical project? Perhaps we have not come so far as we thought, and given as subject a Person who refuses to stay in the past, perhaps that is not surprising. □

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Out of sleight, out of mind

CONSCIOUSNESS EXPLAINED
Daniel C. Dennett
Little Brown, $27.95, 511 pp.

Dennis O'Brien

Daniel Dennett had the misfortune of reading Descartes as a freshman in college and has been "hooked," he says, on the mind-body problem ever since. The mind-body problem is, supposedly, how do all those electrical-chemical pushes and pulls in the brain produce "consciousness" which is totally unconscious of all those pushes and pulls. Dennett sets forth to "solve" the mind-body problem by presenting us with a thoroughly "empirical materialistic" theory of consciousness with no ghosts in the mental machine.

Given the baleful influence of Descartes on Dennett's subsequent philosophy about mind and body, much of *Consciousness Explained* is an attempt to escape from the Cartesian conundrum of how mind and body could ever be connected. Descartes had hypothesized that the pineal gland converted the machine-like properties of the material body into ethereal spiritual contents of mind. Somehow, the pineal gland produces a grand mental show in what Dennett calls "the Cartesian Theater." Dennett denies that any such transition from material to ethereal is possible. The "mental" is simply the working of a "virtual machine"—no special "mental" property, it is machines all the way down.

"Virtual machine" is a computer term for a set of transformations that occur not by hard wire but by a set of rules. Real machines are rigid because they are wired that way, virtual machines do their thing because they read—and perhaps revise—software rules. Dennett supposes that the mind-machine operates on "Pandemonium architecture." Slightly revising Dennett, the mind is not a set piece in the Cartesian Theater but a production of Pandemonium Studios. A variety of script writers have been simultaneously alerted and all are clamoring to get their scenarios produced. Pandemonium Productions operates on a "multiple draft" principle in which the writers and editors fight it out in a semi-Darwinian struggle for survival. Consciousness goes to the successful draft. Dennett describes an odd pathological condition, hemineglect, in which the individual fails to recognize events on one side of the sensory field:

> ...a loss of political clout by certain parties of demons in the brain, due, in many but not all cases, to the death or suppression of their Representative. These demons are still active, trying to do their various things and even succeeding on occasion, but they no longer can win out in certain competitions against better organized coalitions.

Consciousness Explained is a sprightly, intelligent, fascinating attack on a philosophical hardy perennial. Dennett combines insights from psychology, philosophy, and most importantly—AI (Artificial Intelligence). He is certainly correct in rejecting the utter mystery of mind bequeathed to the tradition by Descartes. Dennett refers frequently to a famous cartoon in which two scientists are examining a long complex equation. In the middle of the algebraic transformations is a written interpolation: "Then a miracle occurs." One scientist says to the other, "I think you should be more explicit here in step two." Descartes's pineal plug from body to mind is just such a miracle needing explanation.

The problem, in my judgment, with Dennett's "solution" is that it replaces miracle with magic. *Consciousness Explained* is a grand magical performance: entertaining, full of abracadabra (borrowed from AI lingo), and resting finally on sleight of hand. If the rabbit comes out of the hat (mind

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emerges from mechanism), it is because the rabbit was hidden in the hat all along. This seems immediately obvious if one wonders how all those "demons" emerge from "pandemonium" with sufficient "political clout" to become consciousness. Putting "pandemonium" in the brain seems to slip consciousness (persons panicking) into the neurons, and before one can say "megabyte!" consciousness emerges from the empty vessel.

Lest one think that this is a superficial critique of lively metaphor, consider the sober concept of "memory." We certainly talk about computer "memories"; you may have purchased your last PC because of its kilobyte "memory." Computer memory is not only staggeringly large but it is, as Dennett says, "super-reliable." But that is the sleight of hand. The original meaning of "memory" is borrowed from the human performance. Human memory notes a performance which is contrasted with forgetting. Super-reliable "memory" never "forgets," which suggests strongly that whatever it is, it is not finally like human memory. The failure to forget on the part of AI apparatus, is not some striking empirical feat, it is "metaphysical" in the bad sense.

The scientist strikes the table and says, "This table is not solid." Suddenly I worry that my furniture is unreliable. Not at all. The scientist means that the table is ultimately composed of molecules separated by vast spaces. The scientist has introduced the notion of super-solid (molecular density). In that sense my reliable table and rickety chair are equally "unsolid." Super-solid tables and super-reliable memories live only in a metaphysical nether world.

For all its ingenuity, I believe that the AI approach to consciousness involves this simple sleight of hand: a term is taken from its human context (memory) given a super-reliable gloss, pulled from the mechanism and then proclaimed to be what we were looking for (human consciousness).

A final comment: Dennett finally does not really give us a definition of "consciousness." It is difficult to know if *Cnscss* has been *explained* if one is not sure what *Cnscss* is. More difficult, is that I am not sure what Dennett thinks an *explanation* of consciousness would be. He expresses his intent to give an empirical, materialistic explanation. But the notion of material explanation needs explanation. Aristotle, who happily avoided Descartes's problem by being born two thousand years too soon, says the following about mind (consciousness, soul): "if the eye were the whole body, then seeing would be the soul (*psyche*)." The physical eye is the "material explanation" of seeing; it is the mechanism which makes seeing possible. A blind scientist might understand the mechanism in the sense of appreciating the way all the gears, levers, synapses, rods, and cones connected, and yet not "understand" what the mechanism does when turned on. *Material* explanations, says Aristotle, are sleight of hand: actualization (seeing) is slipped into the material possibilities which then produce the effect by magic. (The chicken is just the egg in another guise or, as Dennett suggests in a revelatory joke: a scholar is just a library's way of making another library.) If actualizations are already fully explained in the materials, one produces a metaphysics that makes change illusory, freedom impossible, and philosophy depart from common sense. Human consciousness, if it is to be "explained" at all, must exist in a world of change, freedom, and common sense. □

WHERE IT GETS SQUISHY

FLYING BUTTRESSES, ENTROPY, AND O-RINGS

The World of an Engineer

James L. Adams

Harvard University Press, $24.95, 256 pp.

Nancy M. Haegel

Thousands of visitors each year touring Detroit's automotive assembly factories are impressed, disconcerted, or simply amazed by the sheer speed, complexity, and automation they see. Modern technology and engineering are on display as a car moves from an unrecognizable skeleton to a shiny product on the showroom floor. Even Ralph Nader would be hard pressed to avoid an expression of wonder as finished automobiles emerge from the production line.

Taking a plant tour is one thing. Being an engineer is another. James Adams, a mechanical engineer and professor at Stanford, attempts to bridge that chasm in *Flying Buttresses, Entropy, and O-Rings*. Adams surveys the history and future of engineering and describes the key aspects—invention and design, development and testing, manufacturing and assembly, science and research, money and business—of the engineering profession. Admitting that "engineering and technology are not well understood by most people," Adams seeks to inform those who, because of profession, partner, or just general interest, want to know more about engineering. And, he suggests, we should want to know more, since "a society as technologically based as ours cannot remain functionally democratic, in the sense of making informed choices about our future, without an electorate and leaders who understand technology and the engineering process that is its core."

The word engineer comes from the Latin *ingeniator*, or "one who is ingenious at devising." The British Institute of Civil Engineers organized in 1818, but their professional colleagues were at work millennia before. To stand before the Egyptian pyramids (3000-2500 B.C.) is to observe the efforts of early civil engineers. Working with slave labor readily sacrificed in pursuit of the cause, these engineers moved two-and-a-half-ton blocks over large distances. The desire of rulers to build monuments to their god or to themselves provided early motivation for technological marvels. In addition, human conflict was another important, and still dominant, force in the development of technology. From David's slingshot in the valley of the Terebinth to modern infrared technology in the deserts of Iraq, engineering and warfare have walked hand in hand.

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The attitude of Greek civilization toward engineering and technology continues to shape the modern profession. Although users of skilled technology, the Greek upper classes preferred "nonmaterial" pursuits, leaving engineering for the lower classes, slaves, and foreigners. Few educated people today would boast of their lack of competence or interest in history or literature, yet in many circles, ignorance of engineering and technology, physics and math is displayed with pride.

Ignorance and stereotyping go together, and engineers and their profession have been the subject of both. The resultant sense of being unappreciated and misunderstood often means that engineers either don't bother to explain what they do, or else they try too hard. This is reflected in Adams's efforts to define engineering, to describe how engineers establish and solve problems, to explain what design, development, and manufacturing really mean. It's a worthwhile attempt—this is, after all, the world of the engineer—but it is not particularly interesting.

The most engaging discussion concerns the role of development and testing, risk and failure in modern engineering. Adams tells a revealing story of designing a safety system for industrial milling machines. His task was to make foolproof a machine that had high-speed cutting parts and represented a serious safety risk. How does one ensure that workers' hands are never in harm's way? Adams designed a system requiring two separate buttons to be depressed before the mill would run. When an injury occurred soon after the new system was installed, he discovered that the workers were using other objects to depress one button, allowing them to operate the machine more easily, more rapidly and, of course, more dangerously.

"An airplane that could not crash is simply impossible to conceive," the author points out, reminding us that some risk is attendant to most human activity. Adams too readily dismisses, however, valid criticisms raised about the role of technology. He writes, "The Three Mile Island and Chernobyl nuclear plants, the Bhopal and Stark incidents, the Exxon spill, and the exploding Pinto gas tank are a few more well-known 'incidents' of failure....Granted that they were all tragedies, and tragedies should not occur. But most of the participants were professionals, generally competent at their jobs, and I think concerned. Perhaps one can conclude that as long as we live with complicated technological systems and demand increasing sophistication and affordable costs, things will occasionally go wrong, despite wishes and efforts to the contrary." The author's glib conclusion here precludes a harder look at the dark side. Incompetence, excessive drive for profits, and short-term thinking are not unknown and can also lead to failure.

Adams does discuss the difficult public policy choices involving technology and the limited expertise that often drives nontechnical people to demand "perfect technology which costs next to nothing and will not result in future unknowns." Engineers know that this is not possible and "tend to become frustrated by the expectations of the nontechnical people and unsympathetic to their unwillingness to pay for new developments. They also tend to be uncomfortable with the squishiness and squeamishness of the debate." In this case, Adams's own stereotype is more dangerous to engineers than many of the others that he works to dispel. Something is wrong with either the perspective or the profession if engineers are uncomfortable with the emotions and values, " the squishiness and squeamishness," which naturally affect decisions on the environment, risk assessment, and quality of life.

What does the future hold? "Technology," the author writes, "is advancing by leaps and bounds, but human brains are not. Many of us are already saturated with information to the point of confusion." It is comforting to know that this confusion exists for the author as well—the text confuses fission and fusion at one point and the description of the Myers-Briggs inventory is misleading. In the midst of our confusion, Adams suggests that "engineers must learn to produce better products, which not only function well but satisfy emotional needs, are consistent with cultural values, fulfill our intellectual desires for quality and sophistication, and have minimal adverse effects on the environment." A challenging task."What are engineering and technology?... Who does them? What can they accomplish, and why do they seem to result in so much damage as well as good? To what extent does our society control them, and to what extent do they determine our lives?" These are the questions that *Flying Buttresses, Entropy, and O-Rings* seeks to answer, and interested readers will find it a useful book, full of good information. Still, these questions could also be explored by taking your favorite engineer out to dinner. It might be just as worthwhile and more fun for the money. □

REVIEWERS

DENNIS O'BRIEN *is president of the University of Rochester. His most recent book is* God and the New Haven Railway *(Beacon).*
NANCY M. HAEGEL *is an associate professor of materials science at UCLA and a Kellogg National Fellow.*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

dents by another student, seeks to clarify the causes of those two tragedies. She carefully gives background for the City College incident and the facts about it unearthed by investigations.

At that point her writing becomes illogical. A "nagging suspicion" about "the politics of race" appears two paragraphs later as an assertion that "Harleston's policy translated down the administrative ladder *clearly led* school officials to ignore rules, to suspend judgment, and at times to take leave of their common sense. *And the students followed their lead*" [emphasis added]. That is an impressive example of mental gymnastics.

Ms. Steinfels proceeds to apply further illogical thinking to the shooting at Thomas Jefferson High School. From newspaper accounts of the incident, it was largely the result of a student feud and the assailant's decision to use a concealed weapon at the school. Measures to prevent easy access to firearms by teen-agers might have prevented the tragic outcome. Since such measures are the business of legislation and enforcement, and since powerful lobbying has consistently blocked weapons legislation, it is unfair to, as it were, splash the blood from the incident on Mayor Dinkins. The mayor's visit to

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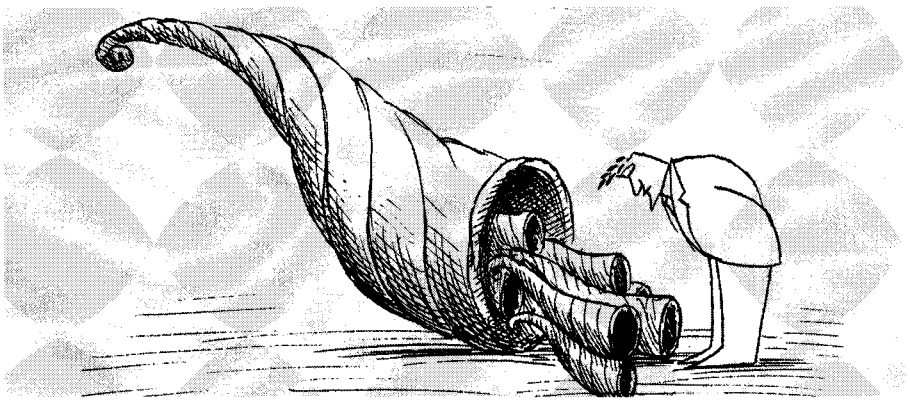

the school was planned long before the shooting, and certainly was intended to boost the students' morale. But, according to Ms. Steinfels, his words at the school were moving but meaningless because the mayor has so far "managed social conflict by avoiding confrontation." There is no attempt at balance in her criticism, although she finds it "painful and difficult to raise issues of responsibility and accountability" with black leaders because of the unjust ways blacks have been historically treated. Instead she writes, "the awful truth is that no one, black or white, will 'mess' with young blacks, especially young black males." The stark emotionalism of that last quotation entirely dispenses with sober analysis. It also strongly argues against the credibility of her reluctance to "raise issues" with blacks. This longtime black reader considers it highly regrettable that *Commonweal*'s editor has chosen to promote controversy rather than provoke thought with "Why They Died."

ROLAND LAIRD

The author replies:

I don't see the illogic or the "mental gymnastics" Mr. Laird detects in my Notebook item. It was a reflection on the too common occurrence in New York, and elsewhere, of young blacks being shot, crushed, burned, etc., carelessly and unnecessarily. Of course the details vary as does the responsibility—in any case I did not "splash the blood" on President Harleston or Mayor Dinkins. I did point to what seems to me undeniable: "no one, black or white, will 'mess' with young blacks, especially young black males." Why? I answered: "Adult fear and confusion about rules and responsibility have taken their toll at City College and elsewhere." Does Mr. Laird disagree? Does he have another answer?

MARGARET O'BRIEN STEINFELS

Protecting life

Elkhart, Ind.

To the Editors: Why do you seem dismayed that "prolife forces in Ireland are willing to go very far indeed...in using civil law to compel compliance with their moral views" ["'Roe' redux," March 13]?

The unborn child is a person, even if his/her father committed a crime, and it is properly illegal to kill him/her if the state is doing its job of protecting human rights.

If a person announces that he/she intends to commit a crime, the state may properly prohibit that person from doing so, even by the use of injunctions restricting the person's freedom of action.

When people kill people, it *is* the state's business, and not just a matter of moral views.

ROGER BLAINE

Resisting torture

St. Louis, Mo.

To the Editors: I spent a sleepless night contemplating the mystery of both human evil and human courage after reading Jennifer Reidy's report on the torture of Dr. Mohammed Mandour in Egypt ["Torture for a Healer," February 14]. Later I saw a follow-up report about him from Amnesty International; it includes excerpts from a speech of his that gave due credit to AI and other human rights organizations that helped end his ordeal. I urge *Commonweal* readers to join one of these groups; without their solidarity one is tempted to despair when reading of such monstrous human behavior.

MARIE D. HOFF

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Position Opening

The Archdiocese of New York is reopening the search for a Catechumenate Coordinator, to begin in September 1992. Applicants should send a résumé and three references to Rita Ferrone, Office of the Catechumenate, 1011 First Avenue, #1679A, New York, NY 10022.

Biblical Institute

Second Annual Ecumenical Biblical Institute: June 21-26, 1992, Rosemont College, Rosemont, PA. Lecturers: Paul J. Achtemeier, I Peter; Elizabeth Achtemeier, What's the Bible All About; Rev. Frank J. Matera, Gospel of Luke; William L. Holladay, Psalms Through Three Thousand Years. Write: Brother Lewis Mullin, FSC, Director of Biblical Institute, Rosemont College, Rosemont, PA 19010. (215) 688-7610.

Baking Need

This summer a Catholic Worker House in Worcester, Massachusetts, is losing the kitchen facilities of its Bread Not Bombs Bakery, which helps support its aid to the 50-60 men and women who come to their House each year. To set up their wholesome-food bakery in a small storefront in the poor section of that city, they need $10,000. Contributions should be sent to: SS Francis and Therese Catholic Worker, 52 Mason St., Worcester, MA 01610.

Catholic Priest Wanted

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Kerry A. Robinson, editor

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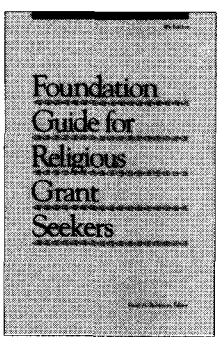

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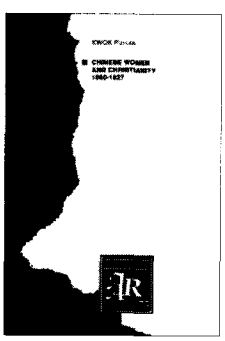

Religion, the Independent Sector, and American Culture
Conrad Cherry and Rowland A. Sherrill, editors

Essays on the intersection of religion and culture in the areas of Catholic charities, higher education, hospital ethics committees, and public policy are included, along with contributions on the Pastoral Care Movement and the tax exempt status of churches and charities. Of particular interest to students of philanthropy, American culture, and the sociology of religion.
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